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Little French Masterpieces

I. Prosper Mérimée
II. Gustave Flaubert
III. Théophile Gautier
IV. Honoré de Balzac
V. Alphonse Daudet
VI. Guy de Maupassant

LITTLE FRENCH MASTERPIECES

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT
From an etching

Little French Masterpieces

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Gustave Flaubert

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Introduction

Gustave Flaubert

(1821–1880)

IN 1876 George Sand, having long sown Heaven knows what wild oats, had become a good, kind, motherly old woman of genius; and among those who poured their sorrows into her large heart was Gustave Flaubert. Writing to her on a certain Sunday evening in that year, he said: "After finishing my short story, I shall start another; for I am too much shaken to set myself to any great work."

Too much shaken! Flaubert came into the world at Rouen on the 12th of December, 1821, and had, therefore, in 1876, attained to the age of fifty-five, and few men probably have ever lived that number of years without receiving some pretty shrewd knocks at the

hands of Fate. But apart from his general liability to the blows that afflict mankind, it can scarcely be said that he had been mauled out of measure. It is true he suffered at a comparatively early age, and almost through life, from some sort of epileptic seizure. And it is also true that the government of Napoleon III.—itself such a model of purity!—had prosecuted him as a writer of more than questionable morals, on the publication of his first book, *Madame Bovary*. Again, notwithstanding an immense contempt for politics, he had felt, through his inmost being, the sufferings and disasters of France in the "Terrible Year." Later,—shortly, indeed, before the date at which he wrote, as quoted above, to George Sand—he had greatly compromised his private fortune, nearly ruined himself in trying to help the husband of his niece. And, if we wish to complete the tale of his misfortunes, it may be added that his literary work was produced with immense labour and sweat of brain.

But, after all, this is not such a terrible list. And how much there is to set on the other side! Nay, of the troubles enumerated, two at least were as clouds with the lining of silver. Had it not been for the epileptic fits, he would scarcely have induced his medical father, who had a fine contempt for letters, to allow him to devote his life to the writing of fiction. The government prosecution — though, to his credit be it spoken, the thought conveyed no comfort — yet proved the most excellent of advertisements. Even the crippling of his means, though undeniably a heavy blow, yet was not sufficient to alter the settled habits of his life, and drive him from the home he loved. To the end he occupied the great bare room, overlooking the Seine, where he had been wont to battle, hour after hour, against every rebellious part of speech, and when elated by victory, to roar out his sonorous periods to the echoing walls. And if at times his toil seemed almost unendurable, most certainly it also brought pleasure.

No, taking a general view, and except in one particular to which I shall presently revert, it cannot be said that the Fates had dealt unkindly with this individual mortal. He possessed, almost to the last, means amply proportioned to his wants. He had leisure, undeterred by family or social claims, to devote himself to the one absorbing passion of his life, the art of prose composition. There was neither need nor temptation to pander, in the slightest or most excusable degree, to the public taste. He could altogether afford to disregard popularity. And yet from the very first fame was his. *Madame Bovary* (1857), had no sooner appeared than it "numbered good intellects," and his prosecution brought him, as it were, upon the European stage. His name was on every tongue.

Salammbô (1862) might be voted a work of labour and oppressive, but no one could deny its immense power and erudition. Sainte-Beuve, the almost unquestioned king among

the French critics of the day, devoted to these books, as they came out, two of his masterly articles, the *causerie* dealing with *Salammbô* being specially full and elaborate. If *Sentimental Education* (1869) and *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1876) did not add to his popularity, they in no wise impaired his credit as a writer. Among his friends were George Sand, Sainte-Beuve, Renan, Turgeneff, Dumas *fils,* Zola, Daudet, the Goncourts, and latterly his almost disciple, Maupassant. The younger "naturalist" generation, then in its heyday, looked up to him as its master. His physical infirmity never seems to have prevented him from enjoying the pleasures of life to the full. He mingled freely in such society as he cared to cultivate. He travelled in the East; went, as a preparation for the composition of *Salammbô,* over the ground where Carthage had once stood. Altogether, he lived, like him of Cawdor, "a prosperous gentleman."

What then were the fatal gifts which the

wicked fairy not invited to the christening had foisted upon Flaubert? What drop had she poured into his cup of life to make it bitter? Misanthropy, or not perhaps so much pure hatred of mankind as a terrible love for studying the seamy side of human nature. Stupidity, dullness, had for him an immense attraction. He never wearied in the contemplation of the unimportant. He gloated over things base. His repulsion took the morbid form of lingering over its object, turning it over, examining it on this side and on that, regarding it with a fascination hideous and exclusive. To see nothing but evil and folly in the world is a depressing outlook. In the hands of a master of prose, such curiosity may produce masterpieces; it can scarce conduce to personal happiness. It must become oppressive. When he wrote, as quoted above, to George Sand, he had been for some time at work upon the dreariest and most pessimistic of his works, *Bouvard and Pécuchet,* and ransacked for the purpose all the archives of imbe-

cility. The book was Flaubert's "revenge." "Of what," asks Maxime Ducamp, "had Flaubert to avenge himself?" "Personally of nothing," answers Mr. J. C. Tarver, Flaubert's biographer, "but in the name of knowledge and earnestness, of the levity and ignorance which take the chief places in the synagogue."

And now in weariness, he turned from his great task, ceased to hew at this monument in honour of ineptitude. He felt, for a time at least, that he was capable only of grappling with short stories, and stories of a kind less withered.

The inspiration was a happy one. As Mr. Tarver rightly says: "It is much to be regretted that Flaubert did not discover the short prose story earlier in life; for it is the form best suited to his peculiar powers. It represses automatically his worst fault, his tendency to be drawn away from his main subject by side issues, and to overload his plot with details interesting and amusing in

themselves, but not necessary to the development of the subject, or illustrative of it by contrast; it demands accuracy and refinement of workmanship, exactly suiting the cadenced prose of which Flaubert was enamoured; while its special weakness, its tendency to encourage the appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect, was the one literary pitfall into which Flaubert was physically incapable of straying."

This is no exaggeration. The three short stories contained in the present volume rank with the finest of his work. They are indeed, as Mr. George Saintsbury says, and Zola and other critics have not failed to remark, "examples, and very perfect examples, of all the styles which have made him famous. *A Simple Heart* displays exactly the same qualities of minute and exact observation, the same unlimited fidelity of draughtsmanship which distinguish *Madame Bovary* and *Sentimental Education*. *The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaller* shows the same power over the

mystical and the vague which is shown in *The Temptation of St. Anthony. Herodias* has the gorgeousness, the barbaric colours, and the horror of *Salammbô.*"

Condensation of what is already so quintessential can hardly be considered necessary. Yet the reader may care to have Flaubert's own analysis of *A Simple Heart,* as given in one of his letters: "*A Simple Heart* is just the story of an obscure life—the life of a poor country girl, devout but mystical, devoted but without enthusiasm, and soft-hearted as the crumb of bread. She loves successively a man, the children of her mistress, a nephew, an old man whom she looks after, and then a parrot. When the parrot dies she has it stuffed, and when she is herself dying she confounds in her brain the parrot with the Holy Spirit. All this is by no means ironical, as you are probably thinking, but, on the contrary, very serious and very sad. I wish to excite pity, to move feeling hearts to tears —being a person of feeling myself. Alas,

yes! The other Saturday, at George Sand's funeral, I burst into a fit of sobbing when I kissed the little Aurore, and afterwards when I saw the coffin of my old friend."

Dickens or Daudet would have told the tale otherwise, and no doubt have moved to readier tears. Pathos was not Flaubert's forte. The interest of his work lies rather in the combination of power and sobriety, the grip he has of that poor good creature's character and rudimentary intellect, the way in which he reflects the glowworm light of her piety, the capacity he has for placing us in her atmosphere and surroundings.

With *The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaller* we move into an altogether changed world. The tale was suggested by a "storied window richly dight" in the Cathedral of Rouen. It is the amplified legend of one of those hunter-saints whose conversion and good deeds edified the Middle Ages. The legend's counterpart may be found in Dürer's fine print of St. Eustachius kneeling in adoration before a

mighty stag with a crucifix between its antlers, while a horse and very individual dogs wait patiently for what may follow. And with Flaubert we are back in that old world. Maxime Ducamp, his friend, seems rather to suggest that he wasted energy in "getting up" unduly the woodcraft of the time. But every man must work according to his own lights. Though Flaubert's erudition was great, it did not crush him. Rather by his enormous labour did he steep himself in the spirit of his material, maintaining his own individuality throughout. *That* he never alienated, while able always to reproduce and revivify. The intuition and genius that undoubtedly were his had their root in knowledge. And so in this *Legend*, with its mighty huntings and carnage of beasts, its credulities and penances, we seem to be walking once more in the old mediæval twilight, a twilight not dark at all, but streaming, gules, and or, and azure, through the glory of a cathedral window.

This evocation of the past, this revivifica-

tion of what is dead, are perhaps even more striking in the *Herodias*. Herod Antipas, Herodias herself, her daughter Salome the dancer, Vitellius, the governor of Syria, his son Aulus the loathsome belly-god, and the prophet Iaokanann — these are the protagonists. Around them throng the Roman and the Jew. The scene is the rock fortress of Machærus, overlooking the Dead Sea, the deserts and hills of Judea, the palms of Jericho, the Jordan flowing through a plain burnt to ashes, arid, as white as snow. The lake is like lapis lazuli; the sky one great blue glare; all the landscape palpitates with fierce heat. The human passions, greed, cruelty, revenge, lust, fanaticism,— they too are at fever heat, molten. In the midst of that bestial crew the voice of the Baptist breaks grave and terrible as the clarion of judgment. Then the girl dances her strange dance, a dance to the Western eye rather grotesque than beautiful or even voluptuous — I speak almost as if the scene were before me, so vividly is it pre-

sented, all the more vividly, perhaps, from a certain brooding and suffocating want of space and atmosphere;—but the Oriental eye sees the dancing differently. She wins her odious guerdon. There is the leonine head, hacked and ghastly and dripping blood, upon the charger. At dawn two of the prophet's disciples, the two whom he had despatched to ask if Jesus were the very Christ, and one of the Essenes, take the terrible object from among the relics of the orgy, and bear it towards Galilee. "As it was very heavy, they carried it each in turn [*alternativement*]."

Alternativement—thereby hangs a tale. The expression, as M. Paul Bourget tells us, pleased Flaubert hugely. "He was very proud of finishing his story of *Herodias* with the adverb *alternativement,* 'alternately.' This word, whose two accents on *ter* and *ti* give it a loose swing, seemed to him to render concrete and almost perceptible the march of the two slaves who in turn carried the head of St. John the Baptist." This is ingenious. Is it

not also a little fanciful? (There were, it would seem, *three* instead of *two* bearers; and what authority has M. Bourget to speak of them as *slaves?*) And I ask the question because, with all my admiration for Flaubert as a "stylist," it appears to me that, in his admirable zeal for perfection, he sometimes suffered himself to be lured away into the fantastic and "precious." "There was always a good deal of personal caprice in his purism," says Zola. Nor did he always succeed in avoiding both Scylla and Charybdis. Thus, as Zola says again, while labouring to keep clear of relative pronouns, he fell an easy prey to the conjunction *and*. Again, he would give himself an infinity of trouble, not to use the same word twice, even when the intervening space was such that the repetition could be no offence to ear or eye. Neither was his mode of composition quite compatible with the light grace, "the first fine careless rapture," of those few writers who write perfectly as a bird sings. It was

scarcely possible that prose so sternly handled should retain the bloom of spontaneity.

And as I am making here a small collection of carpings and objections, truth compels me to say that he now and again, though very rarely I admit, offered sacrifices too costly to the Moloch of his sonorous sentences. Thus it will strike most readers as a flaw in *A Simple Heart* that poor Félicité should reason herself into the belief that the Holy Spirit must have chosen the shape of a parrot rather than a dove when descending on the head of Christ, because a parrot can speak, while a dove is dumb. The passage, as Zola tells us, did not fail to offend Flaubert's friends when the story was first read to them; and they exhorted him to expunge it. Flaubert confessed himself shaken. He could not deny that the objection was well founded, and the train of reasoning attributed to the poor country-woman over-subtle. So,—Maupassant completes the story—he spent the night in trying to rewrite the passage, and finally left

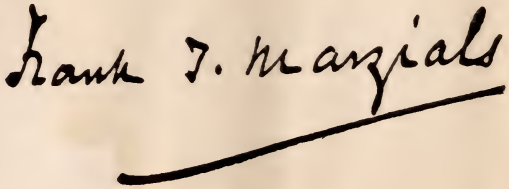
it unaltered, "not having been able to construct another sentence sufficiently harmonious to satisfy his ear." Here we have truth of psychology, a piece of artistic verisimilitude, sacrificed. "So much the worse for the sense: rhythm before everything," cried Flaubert, a propos of another contested passage.

But, after all, this is small carping, and comes to no more than the poor truism that there is no writer in whom, if looked at from every angle, it is absolutely impossible to find some flaw. Flaubert's art, like that of even greater men, has its limitations. What then? It is great art notwithstanding. And in this sheaf of three short stories he by no means gathered in the gleanings, the worst of his harvest. I go back here to the point accentuated by Mr. Saintsbury. Though Flaubert turned to the stories in a moment of discouragement, as a relaxation from heavier labours, from the dreariness and aridity of *Bouvard and Pécuchet,* it was not because he meant to work at them less earnestly. Relaxation

of *that* kind lay outside his nature. Working at all, he must work at his best. As in *Madame Bovary* he had restrained his lyric passion, held it firmly in leash for all its struggles, and striven by patient verisimilitude and perfection of language to give permanent art value to the common and the base, so here he wrought again, and with perhaps an added charm of kindliness, at the story of *A Simple Heart.* As in *Salammbô,* he had, evoking from oblivion an unfamiliar past, given to his prose its full music, and charged his verbal palette with colours gorgeous and barbaric; so here again, using harmony and pigments no less wonderful, he repeated the old triumphs in *The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaller* and *Herodias.* These three stories have in them that which is in man's work not common, an originality striking, genuine, and yet excellent.

They form the last book Flaubert lived to publish. On the 8th of May, 1880, apoplexy clubbed him down. He lies buried near the

beautiful old city of his birth, not far from that room by the Seine where, like another Jacob, he had wrestled with his art until it blessed him.



A Simple Heart

A Simple Heart

I

FOR half a century the housewives of Pont-l'Évêque envied Madame Aubain her servant Félicité.

For a hundred francs a year she did the cooking and the housework, sewed, washed, ironed, could saddle a horse, fatten fowls, make butter; and she remained faithful to her mistress, who, however, was not an agreeable person.

Madame Aubain had married a comely, penniless youth, who died early in 1809, leaving her with two very young children and a quantity of debts.

Thereupon she sold her real estate, with the exception of the farm of Toucques and the farm of Geffosses, the income of which amounted to five thousand francs at most;

and she left her house at Saint-Melaine, to occupy a less expensive one which formerly belonged to her ancestors, and which stood behind the market.

This house, with a slated roof, stood between a passageway and a lane that led to the river. It had, within, differences of level, which caused the unwary to stumble. A narrow hall separated the kitchen from the living-room, where Madame Aubain sat all day long beside the window in a straw easy-chair. Against the white wainscoting eight mahogany chairs stood in line. An old piano, beneath a barometer, held a pyramidal pile of wood and paper boxes. Two upholstered couches stood on either side of the yellow marble Louis Quinze mantel. The clock in the middle represented a temple of Vesta, and the whole apartment smelt a little musty, for the floor was lower than the garden.

On the first floor there was first "Madame's" bedroom, very large, hung with a paper with pale flowers, and containing a portrait of

"Monsieur" in the costume of a dandy. It was connected with a smaller room, where there were two children's cots without mattresses. Then came the salon, always closed, and filled with furniture covered with cotton cloth. Then there was a corridor leading to a study; books and papers cumbered the shelves of a bookcase which surrounded on three sides a large black wooden desk. The two panels in the corner were hidden by pen drawings, landscapes in water-colour, and engravings by Audran, souvenirs of better days and of vanished splendour. A round window on the second floor lighted the bedroom of Félicité, which looked upon the fields.

Félicité rose at dawn in order not to miss going to mass, and worked until night without interruption; then, when dinner was at an end, the silver plate in order, and the door fastened, she covered the blazing wood with ashes and went to sleep in front of the hearth, rosary in hand. No one was more obstinate in bargaining. As for neatness, the glistening

surface of her saucepans drove other servants to despair. Economical in everything, she ate slowly, and picked from the table with her fingers the crumbs of her bread—a twelve-pound loaf, baked expressly for her, which lasted twenty days.

At all seasons she wore a cotton handkerchief fastened behind her back by a pin, a cap concealing her hair, gray stockings, a red petticoat, and over her jacket an apron with a bib, like a hospital nurse.

Her face was thin and her voice sharp. At twenty-five years of age, she was taken for forty. After she had passed fifty, she seemed of no particular age; and, always silent, with body erect and measured gestures, she resembled a wooden woman, performing her duties automatically.

II

FÉLICITÉ had had her love story like other women.

Her father, a mason, had been killed by

falling from a scaffolding. Then her mother died, her sisters scattered, and a farmer took her in and employed her, a slip of a girl, to watch the cows at pasture. She shivered in rags and tatters, drank the stagnant waters of the pools, lying flat on her stomach, was beaten for nothing, and finally was turned away for a theft of thirty sous, of which she was not guilty. She entered another farm, where she became dairymaid, and as she pleased her employers, her comrades were jealous of her.

One evening in the month of August (she was then eighteen), they took her to the assembly at Colleville. She was instantly bewildered, dazed, by the uproar of the minstrels, the lights in the trees, the glaring colours of the costumes, the laces, the golden crucifixes, and the mass of people hopping and jumping all at once. She was standing modestly apart, when a young man of prosperous aspect, who was smoking his pipe, with both elbows resting on the shaft of a wicker cart, invited her

to dance. He treated her to cider, coffee, cake, and a silk handkerchief, and imagining that she guessed his purpose, offered to take her home. On the edge of a field of grain he brutally threw her down. She was frightened and began to cry. He went away.

Another evening, on the Beaumont road, she tried to pass an enormous load of hay which was moving very slowly; and as she brushed against the wheels recognised Théodore.

He accosted her tranquilly, saying that she must forgive everything, as it was "the fault of the drink."

She did not know what to reply, and longed to run away.

He at once began to talk about the harvest, and the notable people of the commune; for his father had left Colleville to live at the farm of Les Écots, so that now they were neighbours.

"Ah!" she said.

He added that they wanted him to marry.

However, he was in no hurry, and was waiting to find a wife to his liking. She hung her head. Thereupon he asked her if she ever thought of marriage. She replied, with a laugh, that it was wrong to make fun of her.

"Why, no, I swear I am not!" and he put his left arm about her waist; she walked on, supported by his embrace; they slackened their pace. The air was soft, the stars shone brightly, the huge load of hay swung from side to side in front of them; and the four horses, dragging their feet along the ground, raised clouds of dust. Then without a word of command they turned to the right. He embraced her once more. She disappeared in the darkness.

The next week Théodore obtained an assignation. They met at the end of the barnyard, behind a wall, under a solitary tree. She was not innocent after the manner of young ladies,— the animals had instructed her; but reason and an instinctive sense of honour prevented her from falling. This resistance

increased Théodore's love, so that to satisfy it (or perhaps honestly), he urged her to marry him. She hesitated to believe that he was sincere. He swore a mighty oath.

Soon he admitted that there was an unfortunate obstacle: his parents, the year before, had purchased a substitute for him; but any day, he might be drafted again; the idea of entering the service terrified him. This cowardice was to Félicité's mind a proof of affection; her own redoubled. She escaped from the farm at night, and when she reached the rendezvous, Théodore tortured her with his anxiety and his persistence.

At last he announced that he would go himself to the prefecture, to make inquiries, and would bring the result to her on the next Sunday, between eleven o'clock and midnight.

When the moment arrived, she hastened to her lover.

In his place she found one of his friends.

He informed her that she would not see him again. To protect himself from the conscrip-

tion, Théodore had married a very rich old woman, Madame Lehoussais, of Toucques.

Her grief was beyond bounds. She threw herself upon the ground, shrieked, appealed to the good Lord, and lay groaning all alone in the fields until sunrise. Then she returned to the farm, announced her intention of leaving, and at the end of the month, having received her wages, she put all of her few effects in a handkerchief, and went to Pont-l'Évêque.

In front of the inn, she questioned a woman in a widow's cap, who happened to be looking for a cook. The girl did not know very much, but she seemed to be so willing, and to demand so little, that Madame Aubain ended by saying:

"Very good, I will take you!"

A quarter of an hour later Félicité was installed in her house.

At first she lived in a sort of trepidation, caused by "the style of the house," and by the memory of "Monsieur," which hovered

over everything. Paul and Virginie, one seven years old, the other barely four, seemed to her to be composed of precious matter; she carried them on her back like a horse, and Madame Aubain forbade her to kiss them every minute, which mortified her. But she was happy. The tranquillity of the surroundings had melted her melancholy.

Every Thursday, regular guests came to play a game of boston. Félicité prepared the cards and the foot-warmers in advance. They arrived at exactly eight o'clock, and retired before the stroke of eleven.

Every Monday morning, the junk man, who lived under the passageway, displayed his old iron on the ground. Then the town was filled with a buzzing of voices, blended with the neighing of horses, the bleating of lambs, the grunting of pigs, and the crunching of the carts along the streets. About noon, when the market was at its height, an old peasant, tall of stature, with his cap on the back of his head and a hooked nose, ap-

peared in the doorway; it was Robelin, the farmer of Geffosses. A short time after came Liébard, the farmer of Toucques, short, red-faced, stout, wearing a gray jacket and boots armed with spurs.

Both brought their landlady fowls or cheeses. Félicité invariably thwarted their cunning; and they went away overflowing with consideration for her.

At indefinite intervals, Madame Aubain received a visit from the Marquis de Gremanville, one of her uncles, who had ruined himself by the lowest debauchery, and who lived at Falaise on the last shred of his estates. He always appeared at the breakfast hour, with a horribly ugly dog, whose paws soiled all the furniture. Despite his efforts to appear a gentleman, even to the point of lifting his hat whenever he said, "My late father," habit always carried the day, and he would fill glass after glass, and make obscene remarks. Félicité would politely turn him out, saying: "You have had enough, Monsieur

de Gremanville! Some other time!" And she would close the door on him.

She opened it with pleasure to M. Bourais, formerly a solicitor. His white cravat and his baldness, his shirt frill, his ample brown frock coat, his way of taking snuff, with his arm forming a half-circle — his whole personality produced in her that perturbation which the sight of extraordinary men commonly causes in us.

As he managed "Madame's" property, he was closeted with her for hours in "Monsieur's" study, and was always afraid of compromising himself, expressed unbounded respect for the magistracy, and claimed to be a Latin scholar.

To afford the children instruction in an attractive form, he made them a present of a geography in engravings. They represented scenes in different parts of the world — anthropophagi with head-dresses of feathers, a monkey carrying off a young lady, Bedouins in the desert, a whale being harpooned, etc.

Paul explained these engravings to Félicité. In fact, that was her whole literary education.

The education of the children was undertaken by Guyot, a poor devil employed at the mayor's office, famous for his beautiful hand, who sharpened his knife on his boot.

When the weather was fair, they went early to the farm of Geffosses. The farmyard was on a hillside, the house in the centre; and the sea, in the distance, looked like a gray blotch.

Félicité would take from her basket slices of meat and they would breakfast in a room adjoining the dairy. That was the only remaining portion of a pleasure-house, now vanished. The wall-paper hung in strips which trembled in the currents of air. Madame Aubain would hang her head, overwhelmed by her memories; and the children dared not speak.

"Why don't you play?" she would say; and they would decamp.

Paul went into the barn, caught birds, skipped stones on the pond, or tapped with a

stick the great casks, which resounded like drums.

Virginie fed the rabbits, threw herself on the ground to pick bluebottles; and her rapidly moving legs showed her little embroidered drawers.

One autumn evening they returned across the pastures.

The moon, in its first quarter, lighted part of the sky, and a mist floated like a scarf over the windings of the Toucques. Cattle, lying on the turf, tranquilly watched the four people pass. In the third pasture, several rose and stood in a half-circle in front of them.

"Don't be afraid!" said Félicité; and, humming a sort of lament, she patted the nearest one on the back; he turned about and the others imitated him. But when they had crossed the next pasture, they heard a formidable bellowing. It was a bull, concealed by the mist. He charged towards the two women. Madame Aubain started to run.—"No! no! not so fast!"—They quickened their pace,

however, and heard a loud snorting drawing constantly nearer from behind. His hoofs beat the grass of the pasture like hammers; he was galloping now!—Félicité turned and tore up with both hands lumps of turf, which she threw in his face. He lowered his muzzle, shook his horns, and trembled with rage, bellowing horribly. Madame Aubain, at the end of the pasture, with her two little ones, ran wildly to and fro seeking a place to pass through the deep ditch. Félicité retreated before the bull, and kept throwing handfuls of the turf, which blinded him, while she cried:

"Hurry up! hurry up!"

Madame Aubain went down into the ditch, dragged Virginie down, then Paul, fell several times while trying to climb the other side, and by dint of perseverance succeeded.

The bull had forced Félicité against a sunken gate; the foam from his mouth spattered her face; a second more and he would have ripped her open. She had time to slip between two

bars, and the huge creature, taken by surprise, stopped.

This incident was a subject of conversation at Pont-l'Évêque for many years. Félicité showed no pride in it, not even suspecting that she had done anything heroic.

Virginie occupied her attention exclusively; for, as a result of her fright, she developed a nervous affection, and M. Poupart, the doctor, advised the sea baths of Trouville.

In those days they were not frequented. Madame Aubain made inquiries, consulted Bourais, and prepared as for a long journey.

Her trunks started the day before, in Liébard's cart. The next morning he brought two horses, on one of which was a woman's saddle, with a velvet back; and on the croupe of the second, a cloak tightly rolled formed a sort of seat. Madame Aubain took her place upon it, behind him. Félicité took charge of Virginie, and Paul rode M. Lechaptois's donkey, loaned on condition that they would take great care of it.

The road was so bad, that the eight kilometres required two hours. The horses sank up to their fetlocks in the mud, and jerked their hips suddenly in their efforts to get out; or else they stumbled in the ruts; and at other times they had to be made to jump. Liébard's mare halted abruptly in certain places. He waited patiently until she went on; and he talked about the people whose estates bordered the road, adding moral reflections of his own to their history. For instance, in the centre of Toucques, as they passed beneath windows surrounded by nasturtiums, he said, with a shrug:

"That's where a Madame Lehoussais lives, who instead of marrying a young man ——"

Félicité did not hear the rest; the horses trotted, the donkey galloped, they rode in single file along a path, a stile turned, two farm boys appeared, and they dismounted in front of the dunghill, at the very threshold.

Mère Liébard, at sight of her mistress, was

lavish of protestations of delight. She served a breakfast, which included ribs of beef, tripe, pork pudding, a fricassee of chicken, old cider, tarts, and brandied plums, accompanying it all with compliments to Madame who seemed in better health, to Mademoiselle who had become "magnificent," to Monsieur Paul who had grown tremendously, without forgetting their defunct grandparents, whom the Liébards had known, having been in the service of the family for several generations. Like them, the farmhouse had an ancient aspect. The beams in the ceiling were worm-eaten, the walls black with smoke, the windows gray with dust. An oaken dresser held all sorts of utensils — pitchers, plates, pewter bowls, wolf-traps, sheep-shears, and an enormous syringe that made the children laugh. There was not a tree in the three farmyards which had not mushrooms at its base, or a tuft of mistletoe among its branches. The wind had blown down a number of them. They had taken

root again, and one and all bent beneath the weight of their berries. The straw roofs, like brown velvet, and of uneven thickness, resisted the most violent squalls; but the waggon-shed was falling to pieces. Madame Aubain said that she would think about it, and ordered the horses to be resaddled.

They did not reach Trouville for another half-hour. The little caravan dismounted to cross the Écores; there was a steep cliff overhanging the boats; and three minutes later, at the head of the wharf, they entered the courtyard of the Agneau d'Or, kept by Mère David.

Virginie, from the very first, felt stronger, a result of the change of air and of the action of the baths. She took them in her chemise, for lack of a bathing-suit; and her nurse dressed her in a coast-guard's cabin, which was used by the bathers.

In the afternoon, they went with the ass beyond Roches-Noires, towards Hennequeville. The path at first ascended between

fields terraced like the greensward of a park, and came out on a plateau, where pastures alternated with ploughed lands. On the edge of the road, amid the underbrush of thorns, were holly bushes; here and there a tall dead tree described zigzags with its branches against the blue sky.

Almost always they stopped to rest in a meadow, with Deauville at their left, Havre at their right, and the open sea in front of them. It shone brilliantly in the sun, smooth as a mirror, and so calm that one could hardly hear its murmur; invisible sparrows chirped, and over all spread the vast expanse of heaven. Madame Aubain, seated on the ground, worked at her sewing; Virginie, by her side, wove rushes; Félicité plucked lavender flowers; and Paul, who was bored, wanted to go home.

At other times, having crossed the Toucques in a boat, they hunted for shells. The low tide left starfish, sea-urchins, and medusæ high and dry; and the children ran about trying to

seize patches of foam which the wind blew away. The sleeping waves, as they fell upon the sand, broke all along the beach; it extended farther than they could see, but towards the land was bounded by the dunes which separated it from the Marais, a vast field in the shape of a hippodrome. When they returned that way, Trouville, on its hillside in the background, increased in size with every step, and with all its irregular houses, seemed to bloom in gay disorder.

On those days when it was too hot, they did not leave their room. The dazzling sunlight from without cast bars of light between the slats of the blinds. There was no sound in the village. Below, upon the sidewalk, not a soul. That universal silence magnified the tranquillity of things. In the distance the hammers of the calkers beat upon the keels, and a sluggish breeze brought to their nostrils the odour of pitch.

The principal amusement was the return of the boats. As soon as they had passed the

buoys, they began to tack. Their sails came two-thirds of the way down the masts; and with the foresail swollen like a balloon, they came gliding through the rippling waves to the middle of the harbour, where the anchor suddenly fell. Then the boat drew up alongside the wharf. The crew threw the flapping fishes over the rail; a line of carts awaited them, and women in cotton caps rushed forward to take the baskets and embrace their men.

One of them one day accosted Félicité, who shortly after returned to the inn radiant with joy. She had found a sister; and Nastasie Barette, Madame Leroux, appeared, with a young baby at her breast, leading another child with the right hand, and at her left a little cabin-boy, with his hands on his hips and a sailor's cap over his ear.

After a quarter of an hour, Madame Aubain sent her away.

They constantly met them hovering about in the neighbourhood of the kitchen, or on the

walks they took. The husband did not show himself.

Félicité became very fond of them. She bought them a counterpane, shirts, and a stove; evidently they were working her. Her weakness irritated Madame Aubain, who moreover did not like the familiarity of the nephew — for he called her son "thou"; and as Virginie was coughing, and the weather had become bad, she returned to Pont-l'Évêque.

M. Bourais advised her concerning the choice of a school. That at Caen was considered to be the best. Paul was sent there, and bravely bade them all adieu, well pleased to go to live in a house where he would have playfellows.

Madame Aubain resigned herself to separation from her son, because it was indispensable. Virginie thought less and less about him. Félicité regretted his uproar. But a new occupation diverted her thoughts; beginning at Christmas, she took the little girl to catechism every day.

III

WHEN she had made a genuflexion at the door, she went forward under the lofty nave, between the double line of chairs, opened Madame Aubain's pew, seated herself, and looked about her.

The boys on the right, the girls on the left, filled the stalls of the choir. The curé stood near the reading-desk; on a stained-glass window in the apse, the Holy Spirit hovered above the Virgin; another showed her on her knees before the child Jesus; and behind the tabernacle was a wooden group representing St. Michael overcoming the dragon.

First of all, the priest gave them an outline of the Sacred History. She fancied that she saw Paradise, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, cities all in flames, whole nations dying, idols overthrown; and she retained from that bewildering illusion respect for the Most High and dread of His wrath. Then she wept as she listened to the story of the Passion.

Why did they crucify Him who loved children, fed the multitude, cured the blind, and chose from meekness of spirit to be born among the poor, on the dunghill of a stable? The sowing, the harvest, the wine-presses, all those familiar things of which the Gospel speaks, came into her life; the passing of God had sanctified them, and she loved the lambs better for love of the Lamb, and the doves because of the Holy Spirit.

She had difficulty in imagining His person; for He was not a bird only, but a flame also, and at other times a breath. Perhaps it was His light which fluttered at night around the edges of the swamps, His breath which drove the clouds, His voice which made the bells melodious; and she sat in adoration, enjoying the coolness of the walls and the quiet of the church.

As for dogmas, she understood nothing about them, did not even try to understand. The curé preached, the children recited, she finally fell asleep, and suddenly awoke when

their wooden shoes pattered along the flat stones as they went out.

It was in this way that, by dint of hearing it, she learned the catechism, her religious education having been neglected in her youth; and thereafter she imitated all Virginie's exercises, fasted as she did, and confessed with her. On Corpus Christi, they made an altar together.

The first communion agitated her in anticipation. She was worried about the shoes, the chaplet, the book, the gloves. With what a nervous trembling she assisted her mother to dress her!

Throughout the mass she was in agony. M. Bourais concealed one side of the choir from her; but directly in front of her, the flock of maidens, wearing white wreaths over their lowered veils, were like a field of snow; and she recognised in the distance her dear little one by her smaller neck and her meditative attitude. The bell tinkled, all the heads bent; there was a silence. When the organ

pealed, the singers and the multitude intoned the *Agnus Dei;* then the procession of boys began; and after them the girls rose. Step by step, with clasped hands, they marched towards the brilliantly illuminated altar, knelt on the first step, received the sacrament one after another, and returned in the same order to their *prie-dieus.* When it was Virginie's turn, Félicité leaned forward to see her; and with the imagination which real affection gave, it seemed to her that she herself was the child; her face became hers, her dress clothed her, her heart beat in her breast; as she was about to open her mouth, closing her eyes, she almost fainted.

Early the next morning she presented herself at the sacristy for monsieur le curé to give her the communion. She received it devoutly, but did not experience the same ecstasy.

Madame Aubain desired to make an accomplished person of her daughter; and as Guyot could teach her neither English nor music,

she determined to put her at school at the Ursuline convent at Honfleur.

The child made no objection. Félicité sighed, considering Madame unfeeling. Then she reflected that perhaps her mistress was right. These matters passed her understanding.

At last, one day, an old spring-cart stopped before the door, and a nun alighted, who had come to fetch Mademoiselle. Félicité placed the packages on the imperial, commended the child to the driver's care, and placed under the seat six jars of preserves and a dozen pears, with a bunch of violets.

At the last moment Virginie was seized with a fit of sobbing; she embraced her mother, who kissed her on the forehead, saying again and again:

"Come, come! courage! courage!"

The step was raised and the carriage started.

Thereupon Madame Aubain had an ill turn; and in the evening all her friends, the Lormeau family, Madame Lechaptois, the ladies

Rochefeuille, M. de Houppeville, and Bourais, appeared to console her.

The separation from her daughter was at first very painful. But three times a week she received a letter from her, and on the other days wrote to her, walked in her garden, read a little, and in this way filled up the empty void of the hours.

In the morning, as a matter of habit, Félicité entered Virginie's bedroom and stared at the walls. It distressed her not to have to comb her hair, to lace her boots, to tuck her into her bed, and not to see every moment her pretty face, not to hold her hand when they went out together. In her enforced idleness she tried to make lace. Her too clumsy fingers broke the threads; she paid no heed to anything, she could not sleep, she was, according to her own expression, "done for."

To divert herself she asked permission to receive her nephew Victor.

He arrived Sunday after mass, with red cheeks, bare breast, smelling of the fields

which he had crossed. She set her table at once. They breakfasted opposite each other; and while eating as little as possible herself, to save expense, she stuffed him so with food that he ended by falling asleep. At the first stroke of vespers she waked him, brushed his trousers, tied his cravat, and went to the church, leaning on his arm with motherly pride.

His parents always instructed him to get something out of her, whether it was a package of brown sugar, soap, brandy, sometimes even money. He brought his clothes to her to mend, and she accepted that task, delighted at anything that compelled him to return.

In the month of August his father took him with him on a coasting-vessel.

It was vacation time. The arrival of the children consoled her. But Paul was becoming capricious, and Virginie was too old to be called "thou," which fact placed a barrier, a sort of constraint between them.

Victor went in turn to Morlaix, to Dunkirk,

and to Brighton; on his return from each trip he gave her a present. The first time it was a box made of shells; the second time, a coffee cup; the third time, a huge gingerbread man. He improved in appearance, had a well-set figure, a slight mustache, honest, frank eyes, and a small leather hat, set on the back of his head like a pilot. He amused her by telling her stories interspersed with marine expressions.

On Monday, July 14, 1819 (she never forgot the date), Victor announced that he had shipped for a long voyage, and was to go two days later, by the Honfleur packet, to join his schooner, which was to sail from Havre very soon. He would be away two years, perhaps.

The prospect of so long an absence was distressing to Félicité; and on Wednesday evening, after Madame's dinner, she put on her galoshes, and traversed the four leagues that separated Pont-l'Évêque from Honfleur, to bid him adieu once more.

When she reached the Calvary, instead of

turning to the left she turned to the right, lost herself among the shipyards, then retraced her steps; people whom she questioned advised her to make haste. She made the circuit of the basin crowded with vessels, tripped over cables; then the ground sank, lights appeared in every direction, and she thought she had gone mad because she saw horses in the sky.

At the end of the wharf other horses neighed wildly, terrified by the sea. A tackle and fall lifted them up and lowered them into a boat, where travellers jostled one another among casks of cider, baskets of cheese, and bags of grain; she heard cocks crowing, the captain swearing; and a cabin-boy stood leaning against the cat-head, heedless of it all. Félicité, who had not recognised him, shrieked, "Victor!" He raised his head; she was rushing forward, when suddenly the gang-plank was removed.

The packet, hauled by women singing, left the harbour. Her cordage creaked, the sluggish waves lashed her prow. The sails swung

over, she could no longer see any one, and on the ocean silvered by the moon the vessel made a black spot which grew lighter and lighter, then plunged into the mist and disappeared.

Félicité, as she passed the Calvary, desired to commend to God the person whom she loved best; and she prayed a long while, standing, her face wet with tears, her eyes raised to the clouds. The city was asleep, coast-guards patrolled the shore; and water rushed incessantly through the chinks in the dam with the noise of a torrent. The clock struck two.

The convent parlour would not be open before dawn. So long a delay would certainly vex Madame; and, despite her longing to embrace the other child, she went home. The servants at the inn were just waking as she entered Pont-l'Évêque.

So the poor little fellow was to toss about on the waves for many months! His former voyages had not terrified her. From England

and from Bretagne one might return; but America, the Colonies, the Islands—all these were lost in an undefined region at the other end of the world.

Thenceforward Félicité thought exclusively of her nephew. On days of bright sunshine she was tortured with thirst; when it stormed, she feared the thunder for him. As she listened to the wind roaring in the chimney and blowing off the slates, she saw him, at the mercy of the same tempest, clinging to the top of a broken mast, with his whole body submerged beneath a sheet of foam; or else—a reminiscence of the geography in engravings—he was eaten by savages, captured by monkeys in a wood, or starving to death on a deserted shore. And she never mentioned her anxiety.

Madame Aubain had anxieties of her own concerning her daughter. The good sisters said that she was of an affectionate disposition, but delicate. The slightest excitement exhausted her. She had to abandon the piano.

Her mother demanded regular correspondence from the convent. One morning, when the mail-carrier did not come, she lost patience, and paced the floor from her easy-chair to the window. Really it was most extraordinary! No news for four days!

In order that she might take comfort from her example, Félicité said to her:

"I have n't had any news for six months, Madame!"

"From whom, pray?"

The servant replied softly:

"Why, from my nephew."

"Oh! your nephew!" and Madame Aubain resumed her walk, with a shrug of the shoulders, which signified: "I had forgotten about him. However, I care nothing about him; a cabin-boy, a beggar, a fine business! While my daughter — just think!"

Félicité, although nourished upon rough treatment, was angry with Madame, then forgot. It seemed to her perfectly natural to lose her head on account of the little girl.

The two children were of equal importance to her; a bond of her heart united them, and their fate was destined to be the same.

The druggist informed her that Victor's vessel had arrived at Havana. He had read the news in a newspaper.

On account of the cigars, she fancied that Havana was a country where people did nothing but smoke; and she imagined Victor living among negroes in a cloud of tobacco smoke.

Could he in case of need return by land? How far was it from Pont-l'Évêque? To ascertain, she questioned M. Bourais.

He took down his atlas, then began an explanation of longitude; and he smiled the conceited smile of a pedant at Félicité's bewilderment. Finally, with his pencil-case, he pointed to an almost imperceptible black point in one of the indentations of an oval spot on the map, saying: "Here it is." She leaned over the map; the network of coloured lines tired her eyes without giving her any in-

formation; and as Bourais urged her to say what embarrassed her, she begged him to show her the house where Victor lived. Bourais raised his arms, sneezed, and roared with laughter; such nonsense aroused his hilarity, and Félicité could not understand the reason — she who even expected perhaps to see her nephew's portrait, so limited was her intelligence.

It was a fortnight later that Liébard entered the kitchen at market-time, as usual, and handed her a letter sent her by her brother-in-law; as neither of them could read, she had recourse to her mistress.

Madame Aubain, who was counting stitches in her knitting, placed it beside her, unsealed the letter, gave a start, and said in a low voice, with a searching glance:

"This letter announces a calamity. Your nephew ——"

He was dead. The letter said nothing more.

Félicité fell upon a chair, resting her head

against the partition, and closed her eyes, which suddenly became red. Then, looking at the floor, her hands hanging by her side, and with staring eyes, she repeated at intervals:

"Poor little fellow! poor little fellow!"

Liébard gazed at her, sighing profoundly. Madame Aubain trembled a little. She suggested to her that she should go to see her sister at Trouville.

Félicité replied, by a gesture, that she did not care to.

There was a silence. Worthy Liébard deemed it fitting to withdraw.

Then she said:

"This don't make any difference to them."

Her head fell back, and instinctively she raised the long needles from the work-table from time to time.

Women passed through the yard with a barrow filled with dripping linen. As she spied them through the windows, she remembered her wash; having soaked her

clothes the day before, she must rinse them out to-day; and she left the room.

Her board and her tub were on the shore of the Toucques. She tossed a heap of shirts on the bank, turned up her sleeves, and took her beater; and the sturdy blows she dealt were heard in the other gardens near by. The fields were empty, the breeze rippled the surface of the stream; and at the bottom tall grasses swayed, like the hair of dead bodies floating in the water. She restrained her grief and was very brave until evening; but, in her bedroom, she gave way, and lay flat on her bed with her face buried in the pillow and her clenched hands against her temples.

Much later she learned the circumstances of Victor's end from his captain himself. He had been bled too much at the hospital during the yellow fever. Four doctors held him at once. He died immediately, and the chief doctor said:

"Bah! one more!"

His parents had always treated him cruelly.

She preferred not to see them again, and they made no advances, either from forgetfulness, or because of the hardened sensibilities of the poor.

Virginie grew weaker. Oppression of the chest, cough, constant fever, and hectic spots on the cheek-bones indicated some deep-seated affection. M. Poupart advised a visit to Provence. Madame Aubain decided for herself, and would have taken her daughter home at once, had it not been for the climate of Pont-l'Évêque.

She made an arrangement with a stable-keeper, who drove her to the convent every Tuesday. In the garden there was a terrace from which the Seine could be seen. Virginie walked there on her arm through the falling vine leaves. Sometimes the sun, breaking through the clouds, forced her to blink while she gazed at the sails in the distance and at the horizon stretching from the Castle of Tankerville to the lighthouses of Havre. Then they rested under the arbour. Her

mother had obtained a small cask of Malaga, and, laughing at the idea of getting tipsy, she drank two fingers of it, never more.

Her strength returned. The autumn passed comfortably. Félicité encouraged Madame Aubain. But, one evening, when she had been to do an errand in the neighbourhood, she found M. Poupart's cabriolet at the door, and he was in the porch. Madame Aubain was tying her hat.

"Give me my foot-warmer, my purse, my gloves; come, quickly!"

Virginie had inflammation of the lungs; her case was desperate, perhaps.

"Not yet!" said the doctor; and they both entered the carriage, amid the whirling snow-flakes. It was almost dark; it was very cold.

Félicité rushed into the church to light a candle, then she ran after the cabriolet, which she overtook an hour later, and leaped lightly up behind, where she was clinging to the straps, when she suddenly thought: "The

yard gate is not locked! Suppose thieves should get in!" And she climbed down.

The next day at dawn she went to the doctor's house. He had returned and had gone away again. Then she remained at the inn, thinking that somebody would bring her a letter. At last, at sunrise, she took the Lisieux diligence.

The convent stood at the foot of a steep lane. At about the middle of the lane she heard strange sounds, a funeral knell.

"That is for somebody else," thought Félicité; and she plied the knocker violently.

After several minutes she heard a dragging step inside, the door was partly opened, and a nun appeared.

With an air of compunction the good sister said that "she had just passed away." At the same moment the knell at Saint Léonard's tolled with redoubled vigour.

Félicité went up to the second floor. From the doorway she saw Virginie stretched out on her back, with clasped hands, open mouth,

and her head thrown back, under a black crucifix, which hung over her, between muslin curtains less pale than her face. Madame Aubain at the foot of the cot, about which her arms were thrown, sobbed hysterically in her agony. The Mother Superior was standing at the right. Three candlesticks on the bureau made red blotches, and the morning mist whitened the window-panes. Some nuns carried Madame Aubain away.

For two nights Félicité did not leave the dead girl. She repeated the same prayers, sprinkled holy water over the sheets, then returned to her seat and gazed at her. At the close of the first vigil, she noticed that the face had turned yellow, the lips blue, the nose was pinched and the eyes sunken. She kissed them several times, and would not have been tremendously surprised if Virginie had opened them; to such minds the supernatural is quite natural. She dressed her, wrapped her in her winding-sheet, laid her in her coffin, placed a wreath upon her head,

and loosened her hair. It was light and extraordinarily long for her years. Félicité cut off a thick lock, half of which she slipped into her breast, determined never to part with it.

The body was taken to Pont-l'Évêque, in accordance with the desires of Madame Aubain, who followed the hearse in a closed carriage.

After the mass, it took them three-quarters of an hour to reach the cemetery. Paul walked at the head of the procession, sobbing. M. Bourais was behind him, then the principal men of the town, the women enveloped in black cloaks, and Félicité. She thought of her nephew, and as she had been unable to pay him these last honours, her sadness redoubled, as if he were buried with the other.

Madame Aubain's despair was beyond all bounds. At first she rebelled against God, declaring that He was unjust to have taken her daughter — her daughter who had never

done wrong, and whose conscience was so pure! but no! she ought to have taken her to the south. Other doctors might have saved her. She blamed herself, prayed that she might go to join her, and shrieked aloud in distress, in the midst of her dreams. One dream especially beset her. Her husband, dressed like a sailor, returned from a long journey, and told her, weeping, that he had received orders to take Virginie away. Thereupon, they took measures together to find a hiding-place somewhere.

Once she returned from the garden completely upset. Just before (she pointed to the spot) the father and daughter had appeared to her one after the other, and had done nothing but gaze at her.

For several months she remained in her chamber, apathetic. Félicité scolded her mildly; she must preserve herself for her son, and for the other in memory "of her".

"Of her?" repeated Madame Aubain, as if she were just waking. "Oh, yes! yes!

you don't forget her!"—An allusion to the cemetery, which she had been scrupulously forbidden to mention.

Félicité went thither every day. At precisely four o'clock, she passed the houses, ascended the hill, opened the gate, and walked to Virginie's grave. There was a little column of pink marble, with a flagstone below, and chains about it, enclosing a tiny garden. The beds were hidden by a coverlet of flowers. She watered their leaves, renewed the loam, kneeling in order to dig more comfortably. Madame Aubain, when she was able to go there, felt a sense of relief, a species of consolation.

Then years passed, all alike, and without other incidents than the return of the great feast days: Easter, the Assumption, All Saints. Domestic episodes marked certain dates, to which they referred later. For instance, in 1825, two painters painted the vestibule stone-colour; in 1827, a part of the roof, falling into the yard, nearly killed a man. In the

summer of 1828, it was Madame's turn to offer the consecrated bread. Bourais absented himself mysteriously about that time; and the old acquaintances one by one left this world: Guyot, Liébard, Madame Lechaptois, Robelin, and Uncle Gremanville, long since paralysed.

One night, the driver of the mail-waggon announced at Pont-l'Évêque the Revolution of July. A new sub-prefect was appointed a few days later, the Baron de Larsonnière, who had been a consul in America, and who had in his family, besides his wife, a sister-in-law with three young ladies already grown up. They could see them on their lawn, dressed in floating blouses; they owned a negro and a parrot. Madame Aubain received a call from them, and did not fail to return it. As soon as they came in sight Félicité hastened to tell her. But only one thing was capable of arousing her emotion, the letters from her son.

He could not follow any career, for his whole mind was absorbed by wine shops. She paid

his debts; he incurred others, and the sighs heaved by Madame Aubain, as she knitted beside the window, reached the ears of Félicité as she turned her spinning-wheel in the kitchen.

They walked together along the espalier and talked always of Virginie, wondering if such and such a thing would have pleased her, or what she would probably have said on this or that occasion.

All her little possessions occupied a wall-press in the room with the two beds. Madame Aubain inspected them as seldom as possible. But one summer day she resigned herself to the necessity, and moths flew out of the wardrobe.

The dresses hung in a line beneath a shelf on which there were three dolls, hoops, a tea-set, and a bowl which she used to use. They took out also the petticoats, the stockings, the handkerchiefs, and laid them on the two beds before folding them again. The sun lighted up those paltry objects, showed the spots

upon them, and the creases made by the movements of the body. The air was warm and blue, a blackbird chirped, everything seemed to live in profound tranquillity. They found a small plush hat with a long nap, nut-coloured, but it was all eaten by moths. Félicité asked for it for herself. Their eyes met and filled with tears; at last the mistress opened her arms, the servant threw herself into them, and they embraced, giving vent to their sorrow in a kiss which made them equal.

It was the first time in their lives, Madame Aubain not being of an expansive temperament. Félicité was grateful to her as for a benefaction, and thenceforth loved her with an animal-like devotion and a religious veneration.

The kindness of her heart developed. When she heard the drums of a marching regiment in the street, she would station herself in front of the door with a jug of cider, and give the soldiers some to drink. She nursed cholera patients. She patronised the Poles, and there

was one of them who declared that he desired to marry her. But they had a falling out; for one morning, on returning from the Angelus, she found him in her kitchen, where he had made himself at home, and had mixed a salad, which he was calmly eating.

After the Poles, it was Père Colmiche, an old man who was reputed to have done horrible things in '93. He lived on the bank of the river, in the ruins of a pigsty. The urchins stared at him through the clefts in the wall, and threw stones which fell on his cot, where he lay, constantly shaken by a catarrhal cough, with very long hair, inflamed eyes, and on his arm a tumour larger than his head. She procured linen for him, tried to clean his hovel, and dreamed of installing him in the bakehouse without disturbing Madame. When the tumour had broken, she dressed it every day, sometimes brought him cakes, and placed him in the sun on a bunch of straw; and the poor old fellow, palsied and drooling, thanked her in his feeble voice, dreaded to

lose her, and held out his hands imploringly as soon as he saw her going away. He died; she paid for a mass for the repose of his soul.

On that day, she had a great stroke of good fortune: just at dinner-time, Madame de Larsonnière's negro appeared, bringing the parrot in his cage, with the stick, the chain, and the padlock. A note from the baroness informed Madame Aubain that, her husband having been promoted to a prefecture, they were going away that evening; and she begged her to accept the parrot as a remembrance and as a token of her respect.

He had filled Félicité's imagination for a long while, for he came from America; and that word reminded her of Victor, so that she inquired about him of the negro. Once she had said:

"How delighted Madame would be to have him!"

The negro had repeated the words to his mistress, who, being unable to take him with her, disposed of him in this way.

IV

HIS name was Loulou. His body was green, the ends of his wings pink, his forehead blue, and his throat golden.

But he had a tiresome habit of biting his stick, he tore out his feathers, scattered filth about, and spattered everything with the water from his bath-tub. Madame Aubain, who disliked him, gave him to Félicité for good.

She undertook to teach him; soon he would say: "Charming fellow! your servant, monsieur! I salute you, Marie!"

His place was near the door, and many people were surprised that he did not answer to the name of Jacquot, as all parrots were called Jacquot. They compared him to a turkey, to a block of wood; so many dagger thrusts for Félicité! It was such strange obstinacy on Loulou's part to refuse to speak as soon as anybody looked at him.

Nevertheless, he liked company; for on Sun-

day, while the ladies Rochefeuille, Monsieur de Houppeville, and some new friends — Onfroy the druggist, Monsieur Varin, and Captain Mathieu — played their game of cards, he would beat the windows with his wings, and make such a terrible noise that it was impossible for them to hear each other.

Evidently M. Bourais's face appeared very comical to him. As soon as he caught sight of him he would begin to laugh, to laugh with all his might. His shrieks resounded in the yard, echo repeated them, and the neighbours came to their windows and laughed with him; and to avoid being seen by the parrot, M. Bourais would slink along the wall, hiding his face with his hat, until he reached the river; then he would enter by the garden gate; and the glances which he bestowed on the parrot lacked affection.

Loulou had received a blow from the butcher's-boy, having taken the liberty to stick his head into his basket; and after that he always tried to nip him through his shirt. Fabu

threatened to wring his neck, although he was not cruel, despite the tattooing on his arm and his heavy whiskers. Far from it! he had rather a liking for the parrot; so much so that he attempted, in jovial mood, to teach him divers oaths. Félicité, dismayed by these new manners, placed him in her kitchen. His chain was removed and he circulated through the house.

When he went down-stairs he placed his curved beak on the steps, and raised his right claw, then his left; and she was afraid that such gymnastics would make him dizzy. He fell ill, he could neither talk nor eat; there was a swelling under his tongue, such as hens sometimes have. She cured him by removing that swelling with her finger-nails. M. Paul one day was imprudent enough to blow a puff of cigar smoke into his face; another time Madame Lormeau teased him with the end of her parasol and he snapped at the ferrule.

Finally, he lost himself. She had placed

him on the grass to give him a breath of fresh air, and went away for a moment; when she returned, no parrot! At first, she hunted for him among the bushes, on the bank of the stream, and on the roof, paying no heed to her mistress, who cried: "Take care! you are mad!" Then she searched all the gardens in Pont-l'Évêque and stopped the passers-by: "You don't happen to have seen my parrot anywhere, do you!" And to those who did not know the parrot she described him. Suddenly she fancied that she could distinguish a green thing fluttering about behind the mill at the foot of the hill. But when she reached the top of the hill, there was nothing! A carrier assured her that he had seen him not long before at Saint-Melaine, in Mère Simon's shop. She hastened thither. They did not know what she was talking about. At last she returned, exhausted, her shoes in tatters and death in her heart; and, sitting down on the bench, beside Madame, she was telling of all she had done, when a light weight dropped

upon her shoulder — Loulou! What in the deuce had he been doing? Perhaps he had been taking a walk in the neighbourhood!

She had difficulty in recovering herself, or rather, she never recovered.

As the result of a chill, she had an attack of angina; shortly after, an earache. Three years later, she was deaf; and she talked very loud, even in church. Although her sins might have been proclaimed in every corner of the diocese without discredit to her or inconvenience to society, monsieur le curé deemed it advisable to receive her confessions only in the sacristy.

Deceptive buzzings completed her bewilderment. Often her mistress would say to her: "Mon Dieu! how stupid you are!" and she would reply: "Yes, Madame," looking about her in search of something.

The narrow circle of her ideas contracted still more, and the music of the bells, the lowing of the cattle, no longer existed. All living things did their work with the silence of

ghosts. A single sound now reached her ears, the voice of the parrot.

As if to divert her, he reproduced the tick-tack of the turnspit, the shrill cry of the fish-hawker, the saw of the cabinet-maker who lived opposite; and when the bell rang, he imitated Madame Aubain: "Félicité! the door! the door!"

They had dialogues, he repeating again and again the three phrases of his repertory, and she answering with words no more coherent, in which, however, her heart poured itself forth. In her isolation, Loulou was almost a son, a lover. He climbed her fingers, bit her lips, clung to her neckerchief: and as she stooped forward, shaking her head after the manner of nurses, the huge wings of her cap and the bird's wings quivered together.

When black clouds gathered and the thunder rolled, he uttered loud shrieks, perhaps recalling the heavy showers of his native forest. The pattering of the rain excited him to frenzy: he would fly about the room like a lunatic,

dashing against the ceiling, overturning everything, and going out through the window to splash in the garden; but he would quickly return, perch upon one of the andirons, and, hopping about to dry his feathers, would show sometimes his tail and sometimes his back.

One morning, in the terrible winter of 1837, when she had placed him in front of the fire because of the cold, she found him dead in the middle of the cage, with his head down and his nails caught in the iron bars. He had died of a congestion, no doubt. She believed that he had been poisoned by the parsley, and in spite of the absence of any proof, her suspicions rested upon Fabu.

She wept so bitterly that her mistress said to her:

"Well, have him stuffed!"

She asked the advice of the druggist, who had always been kind to the parrot. He wrote to Havre. A certain Fellacher undertook the task; but, as the diligence sometimes

lost packages, she determined to carry him herself as far as Honfleur.

The leafless apple-trees succeeded one another along the road. The ditches were covered with ice. Dogs barked around the farmhouse; and with her hands under her mantle, her little black clogs, and her basket, she walked rapidly along in the middle of the road.

She passed through the forest, and reached Saint-Gatien by way of Haut-Chêne.

Behind her in a cloud of dust a mail-waggon came rushing down the steep hill like a shot from a catapult. When he saw that woman, who did not step aside, the driver stood up over the hood, and the postillion also shouted, while the four horses, which he could not check, came on at increased speed; the leaders brushed against her; with a jerk on his reins, he threw them into the ditch, but, in his rage, raised his arm, and as they flew past lashed her from the waist to the hair with his long whip, with such force that she fell upon her back.

Her first gesture when she recovered consciousness was to open her basket; Loulou was not injured, luckily. She felt a stinging sensation on the right cheek; her hands when she put them to it were red; the blood was flowing.

She sat down upon a pile of stones, sopped her face with her handkerchief, then ate a crust of bread which she had put in her basket by way of precaution, and comforted herself for her wound by gazing at the bird.

When she reached the summit of Ecquemanville, she saw the lights of Honfleur twinkling in the darkness like a multitude of stars; beyond, the sea stretched away confusedly in the distance. There a faintness arrested her; and the unhappiness of her childhood, the disappointment of her first love, the departure of her nephew, the death of Virginie, came to her mind all at once, like the waves of the incoming tide, and, mounting to her throat, suffocated her.

Then she determined to speak to the cap-

tain of the packet; and she urged the greatest care upon him without telling him what she was sending.

Fellacher kept the parrot a long while. He always promised it for the following week; after six months, he announced the shipment of a box, and nothing more was heard of it. She began to believe that Loulou would never come back. "They must have stolen him from me!" she thought.

At last he arrived, magnificent to behold, standing erect upon a branch of a tree, which was screwed into a mahogany base; one claw in the air, the head at an angle, and nibbling a nut, which the taxidermist had gilded from love of the grandiose.

She shut him up in her bedroom.

That place, to which she admitted few people, had the aspect at once of a chapel and a bazaar, it contained so many religious objects and articles of all sorts.

A tall wardrobe made it difficult to open the door. Opposite the window which

overlooked the garden was a round window looking into the yard. A table, beside the cot-bed, held a water-pitcher, two combs, and a cube of blue soap in a broken plate. On the walls were chaplets, medallions, several Blessed Virgins, a holy-water sprinkler of cocoanut-wood; and on the bureau, which was covered with a cloth like an altar, the shell box which Victor had given her, a watering-pot, a ball, writing books, the geography in engravings, and a pair of boots; and hanging by a ribbon on the mirror, the little plush hat! Indeed, Félicité carried this sort of veneration so far that she preserved one of Monsieur's coats. All the old stuff which Madame Aubain did not want she took for her room. Thus it was that there were artificial flowers on the bureau, and a portrait of the Comte d'Artois in the recess of the round window.

By means of a shelf Loulou was installed upon a part of the chimney which protruded into the room. Every morning, when she woke, she saw him in the dim light of dawn,

and thereupon recalled the days that had disappeared, and the most insignificant incidents in their slightest details, all without distress and with perfect tranquillity.

As she had no communication with any one, she lived in a somnambulistic torpor. The processions of Corpus Christi revived her. She went about among the neighbours, begging for candlesticks and straw mats to dress the altar which was set up in the street.

At the church she always gazed at the Holy Spirit, and noticed that He bore some resemblance to the parrot. That resemblance seemed to her even more manifest in a picture by Espinal representing the Baptism of our Lord. With His purple wings and His emerald body He was the very portrait of Loulou.

Having purchased it, she hung it in the place of the Comte d'Artois, so that she saw them together at the same glance. They were associated in her thought, the parrot being sanctified by that connection with the Holy Spirit, who in turn became more alive and

more intelligible in her eyes. The Father, to announce His coming, could not have chosen a dove, since those birds have no voices, but rather one of Loulou's ancestors. And Félicité prayed with her eyes on the picture, but from time to time she turned towards the bird.

She longed to join the Daughters of the Virgin. Madame Aubain dissuaded her.

An event of considerable importance occurred: Paul's marriage.

After being clerk to a notary, then in business, then in the customs service, then in the collection of taxes, and having even taken steps to obtain a position in the Rivers and Forests, suddenly, at the age of thirty-six, as if by an inspiration from Heaven, he had discovered his vocation —the Bureau of Registration; and he exhibited such extraordinary faculties there, that an official of the Bureau had offered him his daughter and promised him his patronage.

Paul, having become a serious-minded person, took her to his mother.

She sneered at the customs of Pont-l'Évêque, played the princess, wounded Félicité's feelings. Madame Aubain had a feeling of relief at her departure.

The following week they learned of the death of M. Bourais at an inn in Lower Bretagne. The rumours of suicide were confirmed, and doubts arose concerning his probity. Madame Aubain examined his accounts, and soon learned the whole story of his villainy: misappropriation of arrears, pretended sales of wood, false receipts, etc. Moreover, he had a natural child, and "entangling relations with a person at Dozulé."

This turpitude distressed her deeply. In March, 1853, she was seized with pains in the chest; her tongue seemed to be coated with smoke, leeches did not allay the oppression, and on the ninth evening she expired, being just seventy-two years of age. She was supposed to be younger, because of her brown hair, the smooth bands of which surrounded her sallow, pock-marked face.

Few friends regretted her, for her manners were marked by a haughtiness which repelled.

Félicité wept for her as few servants weep for their employers. That Madame should die before her disturbed her ideas, seemed to her contrary to the natural order of things, inconceivable and monstrous.

Ten days later (the time necessary to hurry from Besançon), the heirs arrived. The daughter-in-law overhauled the drawers, selected some pieces of furniture, sold the others, then they returned to the Bureau of Registration.

Madame's easy-chair, her little table, her foot-warmer, the eight mahogany chairs were gone! The places where the engravings had hung were marked by yellow squares in the middle of the walls. They had taken away the two cot-beds with their mattresses, and in the wall-press none of Virginie's effects were left. Félicité ascended the stairs, beside herself with grief.

The next day there was a placard on the

door; the druggist shouted in her ear that the house was for sale.

She staggered and was obliged to sit down.

The thing that distressed her principally was to leave her room, which was so convenient for poor Loulou. Enveloping him in a glance of agony, she prayed to the Holy Spirit, and adopted the idolatrous habit of saying her prayers kneeling in front of the parrot. Sometimes the sun, streaming in through the round window, struck his glass eye, and caused it to send forth a ray of light which excited her to ecstasy.

She had a pension of three hundred and eighty francs, bequeathed by her mistress. The garden supplied her with vegetables. As for clothes, she possessed enough to clothe her until the end of her days, and she saved the expense of light by going to bed at dusk.

She seldom went out, in order to avoid the shop of the second-hand dealer, where some of the old furniture was offered for sale. Since her fit of dizziness, she dragged one leg, and

as her strength failed, Mère Simon, who had failed in the grocery trade, came every morning to split her wood and to pump her water for her.

Her eyes gave out. The blinds were never opened. Many years passed. And the house was not let and was not sold.

Félicité asked for no repairs, fearing that they might turn her out. The beams in the roof rotted; during one whole winter her pillow was constantly wet. After Easter she spat blood.

Thereupon Mère Simon had recourse to a doctor. Félicité wanted to know what she had. But, as she was too deaf to hear, a single word reached her ears: "pneumonia." That was familiar to her, and she said softly: "Ah! like Madame!" deeming it quite natural that she should follow her mistress.

The time for the Street Altars drew near. The first one was always erected at the foot of the hill, the second in front of the post-office, the third about the middle of the street.

There was much rivalry with respect to the latter, and the parish authorities finally selected Madame Aubain's yard.

The fever and the oppression increased. Félicité was in despair because she had made nothing for the altar. If only she might have been able to put something upon it! Thereupon she thought of the parrot. It was not a suitable thing, the neighbours objected. But the curé gave his permission; she was so happy that she begged him to accept Loulou, her only treasure, when she should be dead.

From Tuesday to Saturday, the day before Corpus Christi, she coughed more frequently. At night, her face was convulsed, her lips clung to her gums, vomiting began; and the next day, at sunrise, feeling very low, she sent for a priest.

Three kind-hearted women surrounded her during the Extreme Unction. Then she declared that she must speak to Fabu.

He arrived in his Sunday costume, ill at ease in that lugubrious atmosphere.

"Forgive me," she said, with an effort to put out her arm; "I thought that it was you who killed him."

What was the meaning of such drivel? To suspect him of a murder, a man like him! and he waxed wroth, and was on the point of making a scene.

"Don't you see that she is out of her head?"

From time to time Félicité spoke to ghosts. The good women went away. Mère Simon ate her breakfast.

A little later, she took Loulou, and, holding him near Félicité, said:

"Come! bid him good-bye!"

Although he was not a corpse, the worms were devouring him; one of his wings was broken, and the stuffing protruded from his body. But, blind now, she kissed him on the forehead and held him against her cheek. Mère Simon took him away to place him on the altar.

V

THE fields exhaled the odour of summer; flies buzzed, the sun made the river gleam and heated the slated roofs. Mère Simon, having returned to the room, dozed lightly.

The sound of the bell awoke her; the vesper service was at an end. Félicité's delirium subsided. As she thought of the procession, she saw it as if she were following it.

All the school children, the singers, and the firemen walked on the sidewalk, while in the middle of the street marched, first: the sexton with his halberd, the beadle with a large cross, the school-teacher keeping an eye on the urchins, the Superior anxious about her little charges; three of the smallest, curled like angels, cast petals of roses into the air; the deacon, with outstretched arms, directed the music; and two incense bearers turned at every step towards the Blessed Sacrament, which monsieur le curé, in his fine chasuble,

carried beneath a canopy of crimson velvet, held by four churchwardens. A crowd of people surged behind, between the white sheets covering the walls of the houses; and they reached the foot of the hill.

A cold sweat stood on Félicité's temples. Mère Simon wiped it away with a cloth, saying to herself that some day she too would be in that plight.

The murmur of the crowd grew louder, was very loud for a moment, then receded.

A fusillade shook the windows. It was the postillions saluting the Sacrament. Félicité rolled her eyes, and said, as loud as she was able: "Is he all right?" still worrying about the parrot.

Her death agony commenced; a rattling breath, more and more hurried, agitated her body. Flecks of foam gathered at the corners of her mouth, and her whole frame trembled.

Soon they distinguished the strains of the bass horns, the high voices of the children,

and the deep voices of the men. At intervals they were all silent, and the pattering of the steps, deadened by the flowers, sounded like a flock of sheep on the turf.

The clergy appeared in the yard. Mère Simon climbed upon a chair to reach the round window, and in that way looked down upon the altar.

Green garlands were hanging upon it, and it was embellished by drapery of English lace. In the middle there was a small casket containing relics, two orange-trees at the corners, and along the sides silver candlesticks, and porcelain vases, from which arose sunflowers, lilies, poppies, foxgloves, and clusters of hydrangeas. This mass of brilliant colours descended obliquely from the top of the altar to the carpet of flowers that stretched along the street; and rare objects attracted the eye. A silver-gilt sugarbowl had a crown of violets; pendants of Alençon jewels gleamed upon the moss, and two Chinese screens displayed their landscapes. Loulou, concealed beneath

roses, showed only his blue forehead, like a plaque of lapis lazuli.

The churchwardens, the singers, and the children stood in line on three sides of the yard. The priest slowly ascended the steps, and placed on the lace his great golden sun, which shot forth beams. All knelt, there was a profound silence, and the censers, waving high in the air, rattled their chains.

An azure vapour ascended to Félicité's room. She opened her nostrils, inhaling it with mystic delight; then closed her eyes. Her lips smiled. The beating of her heart grew slower and slower, each time more feeble, more gentle, as a fountain is exhausted, as an echo disappears; and when she drew her last breath, she fancied that she saw, in the opening heavens, a gigantic parrot soaring above her head.

1876.

The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaller

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I

JULIAN'S father and mother dwelt in a castle in the midst of a forest, on the slope of a hill.

The four towers at the corners had pointed roofs covered with sheets of lead, and the base of the walls rested on masses of rock which descended sharply to the bottom of the walls of the moat.

The pavements in the courtyard were as clean as the flagged floor of a church. Long spouts, representing dragons with heads downward, spat the rain water towards the cistern; and on the window-sills, on every floor, in pots of painted clay, bloomed sweet basil or heliotrope.

A second enclosure, surrounded by stakes,

comprised first an orchard of fruit-trees; then a garden, where flowers were so arranged as to form figures; then, a trellis, with arbours in which to enjoy the fresh air; and a mall, which furnished amusement to the pages. On the other side were the kennels, stables, bakery, wine-press, and barns. A pasture of green turf surrounded the whole, itself enclosed by a stout hedge of thorns.

They had lived at peace for so long that the portcullis was never lowered; the moats were full of water; swallows built their nests in the clefts of the battlements; and the archer who paced back and forth on the curtain all day long returned to the watch-tower as soon as the sun shone too fiercely, and slept like a monk.

Within, the ironwork gleamed everywhere; in the bedrooms, tapestry hangings kept out the cold; and the cupboards overflowed with linen, the casks of wine were heaped up in the cellars, the oaken chests groaned beneath the weight of bags of money.

In the armoury, between standards and heads of wild beasts, one might see arms of all ages and of all nations, from the slings of the Amalekites and the javelins of the Garamantes, to the cutlasses of the Saracens and the coats of mail of the Normans.

The main spit in the kitchen was large enough to turn an ox; the chapel was as luxurious as a king's oratory. There was even a Roman bath, in an out-of-the-way corner; but the good seigneur kept aloof from it, considering it to be a custom of the worshippers of idols.

Always enveloped in a cloak of foxes' skins, he walked about his domain, did justice among his vassals, settled the quarrels of his neighbours. During the winter he watched the snowflakes fall, or listened to the reading of histories. With the first fine days he rode his mule along the narrow roads, by the blossoming grain, and chatted with the peasants, to whom he gave counsel. After many adventures he had taken to wife a damsel of high lineage.

She was very fair, slightly haughty and serious. The horns of her cap brushed the lintels of the doors; the train of her dress dragged three paces behind her. Her household was governed by rules, like the interior of a monastery; each morning she allotted the servants their tasks, overlooked the making of preserves and ointments, sat at the spinning-wheel, or embroidered altar-cloths. By dint of praying to God, there came a son to her.

Thereupon there were great rejoicings, and a banquet that lasted three days and four nights, with the bright light of torches, to the music of harps, on couches strewn with leaves. They ate the rarest spices, with chickens as large as sheep; by way of entertainment, a dwarf came forth from a pie; and as the bowls were too few — for the crowd grew greater and greater —, they were forced to drink from hunting-horns and helmets.

The newly-brought-to-bed was not present at these fêtes. She stayed in her bed, quietly.

One evening she woke and saw beneath a moonbeam that shone in at the window something like a moving shadow. It was an old man in a sackcloth frock, with a chaplet at his side, a wallet over his shoulder, and every appearance of a hermit. He drew near her pillow and said to her, without unclosing his lips:

"Rejoice, O mother! your son will be a saint!"

She was about to cry out; but, gliding along the moonbeam, he rose slowly into the air and vanished. The songs at the banquet rang out more loudly. She heard angels' voices; and her head fell back upon her pillow, above which hung a martyr's bone in a frame of carbuncles.

The next morning all the servants, being questioned, declared that they had seen no hermit. Dream or reality, it must have been a message from Heaven; but she was careful to say nothing of it, fearing lest she should be accused of pride.

The guests took their leave at dawn, and Julian's father found himself outside the postern, whither he had escorted the last, when suddenly a beggar stood before him in the mist. It was a Bohemian, with plaited beard, with silver rings on his arms, and flaming eyes. He faltered with an inspired air these rambling words:

"Ha! ha! your son! much blood! much glory! always fortunate! an emperor's family!"

And stooping to pick up his alms, he lost himself amid the grass, vanished.

The worthy chatelain looked to right and left and called as loud as he could. No one! The wind blew; the morning mist faded away.

He ascribed this vision to the weariness of his brain from having slept too little. "If I speak of it, they will laugh at me," he said to himself. But the grandeur of his son's destiny dazzled him, although the promise was not clear, and he even doubted if he had heard it.

The husband and wife kept their secrets hidden from each other. But both dearly loved the child of such a love; and, venerating him as one remarked of God, they were infinitely heedful of his person. His bed was stuffed with the finest down; a lamp in the shape of a dove burned above it night and day. Three nurses rocked his cradle, and, lightly wrapped in his swaddling-clothes, with his rosy face and blue eyes, in his brocade mantle and cap laden with pearls, he was like a little Jesus. His teeth grew without a single tear from his eyes.

When he was seven his mother taught him to sing. To make him fearless, his father hoisted him upon a great horse. The child smiled with glee and soon knew everything concerning war horses.

A very learned old monk taught him the Holy Writ, the Arabic numeration, the Latin letters, and how to make tiny pictures on vellum. They worked together at the top of a turret, away from the noise.

The lesson at an end, they went down into the garden, where, walking slowly along, they studied the flowers.

Sometimes they saw, passing through the valley, a line of beasts of burden, driven by a man on foot dressed after the Eastern fashion. The chatelain, having recognised him as a merchant, would send a servant to him. The stranger, taking confidence, would turn aside from his road, and, being shown into the parlour, would take from his chest pieces of silk and velvet, goldsmithry, aromatic herbs, strange things of uses unknown; and, at last, the good man would go his way, with a handsome profit, having suffered no violence. At other times a company of pilgrims would knock at the gate. Their rain-soaked garments smoked before the fire; and when their hunger was satisfied, they would tell of their travels: the wanderings of the ships over the foam-flecked sea, the journeys on foot through burning sands, the ferocity of the pagans, the caverns of Syria, the Manger and

the Sepulchre. Then they would give the young lord shells from their cloaks.

Often the chatelain feasted his former comrades in arms. As they drank they recalled their battles, the assaults on strongholds, with the crashing of the machines and the shocking wounds. Julian, who listened to them, would cry aloud; then his father did not doubt that later he would be a conqueror. But at evening, at the close of the Angelus, when he passed between the rows of poor who bent their heads before him, he would take alms from his purse so modestly and with so noble an air, that his mother was full sure of seeing him an archbishop in due time.

His place in the chapel was beside his parents; and however long the services, he remained kneeling on his *prie-dieu*, his cap on the floor and his hands clasped.

One day, during mass, he saw, as he raised his head, a little white mouse coming forth from a hole in the wall. It ran along the first step of the altar, and after turning twice or

thrice to right and left, fled whence it came. On the next Sunday, the thought that he might see it again troubled him. It came again; and each Sunday he awaited it, was vexed by it, was seized with hatred for it, and determined to rid himself of it.

Having closed the door and strewn the crumbs of a cake on the steps, he took his place in front of the hole with his stick in his hand.

After a very long time a pink nose appeared, then the whole mouse. He struck a light blow and stood thunderstruck before that little body, which no longer moved. A drop of blood stained the flagstone. He wiped it hurriedly away with his sleeve, threw the mouse out, and said nothing to anybody.

All kinds of little birds picked at the seeds in the garden. It occurred to him to put peas in a hollow reed. When he heard chirping in a tree, he would softly draw near, then raise his tube and puff out his cheeks; and the little creatures would rain down on his

shoulders in such numbers that he could not help laughing, happy in his mischief.

One morning, as he was returning across the curtain, he saw on the crest of the rampart a fat pigeon pluming himself in the sun. Julian stopped to look at him; there was a breach in the wall at that spot, and a piece of stone lay ready to his hand. He raised his arm, and the stone struck down the bird, which fell from the rock into the moat.

He rushed to the bottom of the moat, tearing himself in the underbrush, searching everywhere, more active than a young dog.

The pigeon, broken-winged, fluttered amid the branches of a privet.

Its persistence in living irritated the child. He set about strangling it; and the bird's writhings made his heart beat fast, filled it with a savage and tempestuous delight. At the last struggle he felt that his senses were going.

That night, during supper, his father declared that at his age he should learn the art

of venery; and he went to fetch an old book of manuscript, containing, in the form of questions and answers, all the learning of the hunting-field. Therein a teacher explained to his pupil the art of training dogs and taming falcons, of setting snares; how the stag might be recognised by his droppings, the fox by his footprints, the wolf by the marks of his body; and the proper way to discover their tracks, how to start them up, where their lairs are usually to be found, what winds are the most favourable; with a list of the cries and the rules of the quarry.

When Julian could recite by heart all these things, his father formed a pack of dogs for him.

First of all there were twenty-four savage greyhounds, swifter than gazelles, but liable to lose their heads; then seventeen couples of Breton dogs, red, with white spots, immovable in their faith, strong-chested, and great howlers. For attacking the wild boar, and for dangerous redoublings, there were forty boarhounds, hairy as bears. Mastiffs from

Tartary, almost as tall as donkeys, flame-coloured, with broad backs and straight legs, were intended for the chase of the wild bull. The black coats of the spaniels gleamed like satin; the yelping of the talbots was equal to the singing of the beagles. In a yard by themselves, shaking their chains, and rolling their eyes, growled eight alan dogs, formidable beasts, that leaped at the throat of horsemen, and had no fear of lions.

All ate wheaten bread, drank from stone troughs, and bore high-sounding names.

The falconry, perhaps, surpassed the pack; the worthy seigneur, by lavish use of money, had obtained tercelets from the Caucasus, sakers from Babylon, gerfalcons from Germany, and peregrines, captured on the cliffs, on the shores of the frozen seas, in distant lands. They lived in a thatch-covered shed, and, fastened to the perch in order of height, they had before them a heap of turf on which they were placed from time to time, to quicken their circulation.

Purse-nets, hooks, caltrops, and all kinds of engines were prepared.

Often they took into the country *oysel* dogs, which soon began to point. Thereupon huntsmen, creeping forward step by step, cautiously stretched over their motionless bodies an enormous net. A word of command caused them to bark; quail flew up; and the ladies of the neighbourhood, invited to the sport with their husbands, children, and servants — one and all pounced upon them, and easily captured them.

At other times, to start up the hares, the drum was beaten; foxes fell into ditches; or a spring-trap, being released, would catch a wolf by the foot.

But Julian despised such convenient artifices; he preferred to hunt, with his horse and his falcon, far from the crowd. The bird was almost always a large Scythian *tartaret,* white as snow. His leather hood was surmounted by a plume, gold bells quivered on his blue feet, and he stood erect on his mas-

ter's arm while the horse galloped and the fields vanished beneath them. Julian, untying his jesses, would suddenly let him go; the bold creature would rise straight in the air like an arrow; and one might see two dots of unequal size whirl about, come together, then disappear in the azure heights. Soon the falcon would descend, rending some bird, and resume his position on the gauntlet, his wings quivering.

In this way Julian hunted the heron, the kite, the crow, and the vulture.

He loved, sounding the hunting horn, to follow his dogs as they ran along the slopes of the hills, leaped the brooks, and ascended towards the woods; and when the stag began to groan beneath their bites, he would quickly strike him down, and then gloat over the fury of the mastiffs which devoured him, cut into pieces on his smoking skin.

On foggy days, he buried himself in the marshes, to watch for geese, otters, and wild duck.

Three equerries awaited him at dawn at the foot of the steps; and the old monk, leaning from his round window, made signs in vain to call him back; Julian would not return. He went abroad in the burning sun, in the rain, when the tempest raged; drank spring-water from his hand, ate wild apples as he rode, rested beneath an oak if he were fatigued, and returned in the middle of the night, covered with blood and mire, with thorns in his hair, and exhaling the odour of wild beasts. He became like them. When his mother embraced him, he received her embrace coldly, seeming to muse upon profound things.

He killed bears with the knife, bulls with the axe, boars with the spear; and one time, having nothing but a stick, defended himself against wolves which were eating dead bodies at the foot of a gibbet.

One winter morning, he started before dawn, well fitted out, with a crossbow over his shoulder and a quiver of arrows at his saddle-bow.

His Danish jennet, followed by two bassets, made the earth ring with his even gallop. Drops of frost clung to his cloak; a strong wind was blowing. In one direction the horizon began to grow light; and in the white glow of the morning twilight, he saw rabbits leaping about at the mouths of their warrens. The two bassets instantly rushed upon them, and here and there rapidly broke their backs.

Soon he entered a wood. At the end of a branch a heath-cock, benumbed by the cold, was sleeping with his head under his wing. Julian, with a backward blow of his sword, sliced off his two claws, and went his way without stopping to pick him up.

Three hours later he found himself on the peak of a mountain so high that the sky seemed almost black. Before him a cliff fell away like a long wall, overhanging an abyss; and on the extreme edge two wild deer were looking into space. As he had not his arrows (for his horse had remained behind), he

determined to go down to them; bent double, with bare feet, he finally reached the first of the bucks, and buried a dagger in his side. The other, terror-stricken, leaped into the abyss. Julian rushed forward to strike him, and, his right foot slipping, fell upon the body of the first one, with his face over the precipice and his arms stretched out.

Having gone down again into the plain, he followed a line of willows bordering a river. Cranes flying low passed over his head from time to time. Julian killed them with his whip, and did not miss one.

Meanwhile the warmer air had melted the frost, broad bands of vapour were floating about, and the sun appeared. He saw gleaming in the distance a stagnant lake, which looked like lead. In the middle of the lake there was a beast which Julian did not know, a beaver with a black muzzle. Despite the distance, an arrow brought him down; and he was vexed because he could not carry away the skin.

Then he pursued his way along an avenue of tall trees, forming with their tops a sort of triumphal arch, at the entrance to a forest. A kid bounded out of the thicket, a deer appeared at a cross-road, a badger came out of a hole, a peacock unfolded his tail on the turf; and when he had killed them all, other kids appeared, other deer, other badgers, other peacocks, and blackbirds, jays, polecats, porcupines, lynxes, an endless multitude of beasts, increasing in number at every step. They walked about him, trembling, with glances full of meekness and supplication. But Julian did not weary of killing,— stretching his crossbow, unsheathing his sword, thrusting with his cutlass, each in turn,— and gave no thought to anything, had no memory of anything whatever. He had been hunting in some region or other, for an indefinite time, by virtue simply of his own existence, doing everything with the ease that one experiences in a dream. An extraordinary spectacle arrested him. Stags filled

a valley shaped like a circus; and crowded together, close to one another, warmed one another with their breaths, which could be seen smoking in the mist.

The hope of such carnage suffocated him with joy for several minutes. Then he dismounted, turned back his sleeves, and began to fire. At the whistling of the first arrow, all the stags turned their heads at once. There were gaps in their mass; plaintive voices arose, and there was a violent movement in the herd.

The slope of the valley was too high for them to cross. They bounded about in the enclosure, trying to escape. Julian aimed, fired; and the arrows fell like the drops of a shower of rain. The stags, driven wild, fought with one another, reared, climbed upon one another; and their bodies with their mingling antlers made a huge mound, which crumbled as they changed their position.

At last they died, stretched on the sand,

foaming at the nostrils, entrails protruding, and the heaving of their bellies subsiding by degrees. Then everything was motionless.

Night was drawing near; and behind the forest, through the spaces between the branches, the sky was as red as a sheet of blood.

Julian leaned against a tree. He gazed with staring eyes at the immensity of the slaughter, unable to understand how he had been able to do it.

On the other side of the valley, on the edge of the forest, he saw a stag, a doe, and her fawn.

The stag, which was black and monstrously tall, bore sixteen antlers and had a white beard. The doe, as light of colour as dead leaves, was nibbling the grass; and the spotted fawn, without interfering with her movements, tugged at her teats.

Once more the crossbow twanged. The fawn was instantly killed. Thereupon its mother, looking up at the sky, brayed in a

deep, heartrending human voice. Julian, in a rage, stretched her on the ground with an arrow fair in the chest.

The huge stag had seen him, and gave a leap. Julian discharged his last arrow at him; it struck him in the forehead and remained planted there.

The great stag seemed not to feel it; leaping over the dead bodies, he came steadily forward, seemed about to leap upon him and rip him open; and Julian retreated in indescribable terror. The monstrous beast stopped; and with flaming eyes, as solemn as a patriarch, as a judge, repeated three times, while a bell tinkled in the distance:

"Accursed! accursed! accursed! Some day, savage heart, thou shalt murder thy father and thy mother!"

He bent his knees, slowly closed his eyes, and died.

Julian was dazed, then overwhelmed by sudden weariness. And a feeling of immense disgust and melancholy swept over him.

With his head in his hands he wept for a long time.

His horse was lost; his dogs had abandoned him; the solitude which enveloped him seemed to threaten undefined perils. Thereupon, impelled by terror, he bent his steps across the country, chose a path at random, and found himself almost immediately at the gate of the castle.

At night he did not sleep. Beneath the flickering light of the hanging lamps, he saw always the great black stag. Its prophecy beset him; he struggled against it. "No! no! no! I cannot kill them!" Then he thought: "But if I should wish to?" and he feared that the devil would arouse the wish within him.

For three months, his mother prayed at his bedside in agony, and his father, groaning bitterly, paced the corridor from morning till night. He summoned the most famous physicians, who ordered quantities of drugs. Julian's disease, they said, was caused by a baleful wind or a desire of love. But the

young man, in answer to all their questions, shook his head.

His strength returned, and they took him to walk in the courtyard, the old monk and the worthy seigneur each holding an arm.

When he was fully recovered, he persisted in refusing to hunt.

His father, desiring to please him, made him a present of a long Saracen sword. It was at the top of a pillar, in a stand of arms. To reach it, a ladder was necessary. Julian mounted it, the sword was too heavy and slipped from his fingers, and in falling, grazed the worthy seigneur so close that his coat was cut; Julian thought that he had killed his father, and fainted.

From that time he had a dread of weapons. The sight of a bare sword made him turn pale. That weakness was a source of great distress to his family.

At last the old monk, in the name of God, of honour, and of his ancestors, ordered him to resume the exercises of a gentleman.

The equerries amused themselves by practising with the javelin every day. Julian very quickly excelled at that sport. He sent his javelin into the necks of bottles, broke the teeth of the weathercocks, struck the nails in the doors at a hundred paces.

One summer evening, at the hour when the mist makes things indistinct, being beneath the arbour in the garden, he spied at the far end two white wings fluttering about at the top of the espalier. He had no doubt that it was a stork, and he hurled his javelin.

A heartrending cry rang out.

It was his mother, whose cap with its long wings was nailed against the wall.

Julian fled from the castle and never appeared there again.

II

HE enlisted in a company of adventurers that was passing.

He became familiar with thirst, hunger, fever, and vermin. He became wonted to the

uproar of battle, to the sight of the dying. The wind tanned his skin. His limbs became hardened by the touch of armour; and, as he was very strong, fearless, temperate, and shrewd, he easily obtained the command of a company.

At the outset of a battle he would sweep his soldiers away with a mighty wave of his sword. With a knotted cord he would climb the walls of citadels at night, swayed by the wind, while the sparks of Greek fire clung to his cuirass, and the boiling pitch and melted lead flowed in streams from the battlements. Often a blow from a stone broke his shield. Bridges too heavily laden with men gave way beneath him. With a twirl of his mace he rid himself of fourteen horsemen. He defied in single combat all those who came forward. More than twenty times he was thought to be dead.

Thanks to the Divine favour, he always escaped; for he was kind to churchmen, orphans, widows, and, above all, old men.

When he saw one walking before him, he would shout to him to show his face, as if he were afraid of killing him by mistake.

Fleeing slaves, rebellious peasants, penniless bastards, all sorts of dauntless men assembled beneath his flag, and he formed an army.

It increased in size. He became famous. His aid was sought.

One after another he bore succour to the Dauphin of France and the King of England, the Templars of Jerusalem, the Surena of the Parthians, the Negus of Abyssinia, and the Emperor of Calicut. He fought Scandinavians covered with fishes' scales, negros armed with round shields of hippopotamus-hide and mounted upon little asses, gold-coloured Indians, who brandished above their diadems broad sabres, brighter than mirrors. He conquered the Troglodytes and the Anthropophagi. He traversed regions so hot that beneath the burning rays of the sun the hair took fire of itself, like torches; and others so cold that the arms became detached from the

body and fell to the ground; and countries where there was so much fog that one walked surrounded by phantoms.

Republics in trouble consulted him. At interviews of ambassadors he obtained unhoped-for terms. If a monarch behaved too badly, he would suddenly arrive and offer remonstrances. He set nations free. He delivered queens confined in towers. It was he, and no other, who killed the serpent of Milan and the dragon of Oberbirbach.

Now, the Emperor of Occitania, having triumphed over the Spanish Mussulmans, had taken as his concubine the sister of the Caliph of Cordova; and he had by her a daughter whom he had brought up in the Christian religion. But the Caliph, pretending to desire to be converted, came to pay him a visit, attended by a numerous escort; he massacred all his garrison, and confined him in an underground dungeon, where he treated him harshly in order to extort his treasures from him.

Julian hastened to his aid, besieged the city, killed the Caliph, cut off his head, and hurled it like a cannon-ball over the ramparts. Then he rescued the Emperor from his prison, and restored him to his throne in the presence of his whole court.

The Emperor, as the reward of such a service, placed before him much money in baskets. Julian would have none of it. Thinking that he desired more, he offered him three-fourths of his wealth; a second refusal; then, to share his kingdom; Julian declined with thanks; and the Emperor was weeping with vexation, at a loss how to manifest his gratitude, when suddenly he struck his forehead and said a word in the ear of a courtier; the curtains of tapestry parted and a maiden appeared.

Her great black eyes gleamed like two very soft lamps. A charming smile parted her lips. The ringlets of her hair were entangled in the jewels of her partly open dress; and beneath her transparent tunic, one could

imagine the youthful beauty of her body. She was plump and dainty, with a slender waist.

Julian was dazzled with love, especially as he had led hitherto a very chaste life.

So he received the Emperor's daughter in marriage, with a castle which she had from her mother; and the wedding festivities being at an end, they parted, after endless courtesies on both sides.

It was a palace of white marble, built in the Moorish fashion, on a promontory, in a forest of orange-trees. Terraces of flowers descended to the shore of a bay, where pink shells crackled under the feet. Behind the castle stretched a forest shaped like a fan. The sky was always blue, and the trees swayed in turn before the sea-breeze and the wind from the mountains, which closed the horizon in the distance.

The rooms, filled with a sort of twilight, were lighted by incrustations on the walls. Tall pillars, slender as reeds, upheld the arches

of the cupolas, decorated with reliefs in imitation of the stalactites in caverns.

There were fountains in the rooms, mosaic pavements in the courtyard, festooned partitions, a thousand dainty bits of architecture, and everywhere such absolute silence that one could hear the rustling of a scarf or the echo of a sigh.

Julian no longer went to war. He reposed, surrounded by a peaceful people; and every day a multitude passed before him with genuflexions and hand-kissings in the Eastern fashion.

Clad in purple, he would sometimes rest on his elbows in a window recess, recalling his hunts of former days; and he would have been glad to ride over the desert after gazelles and ostriches, to lie hidden amid the reeds on the watch for leopards, to pass through forests filled with rhinoceroses, to climb to the peaks of the most inaccessible mountains in order to obtain a better aim at the eagles, and to fight the polar bears, on the ice-floes of the northern sea.

Sometimes in a dream he fancied himself like Father Adam in the midst of Paradise, surrounded by all kinds of animals; by putting out his arm, he killed them; or else they filed before him, two by two, in order of size, from the elephants and lions to the ermines and wild ducks, as on the day that they entered Noah's Ark. From the darkness of the cavern, he hurled unerring javelins at them; others appeared; there was no end; and he awoke, with his eyes glaring savagely about.

Princes who were his friends invited him to hunt. He always refused, hoping, by that sort of penance, to avert his evil fate; for it seemed to him that upon the slaughter of animals the fate of his parents depended. But he suffered at not seeing them, and his other longing became unendurable.

His wife, to divert him, sent for jugglers and dancing-girls.

She went abroad with him, in an open litter, through the country; at other times, lying in a shallop, they watched the fishes

gambol about in the water, which was as transparent as the air. Often she threw flowers in his face; sitting at his feet, she would play upon a mandolin with three strings; then, placing her clasped hands upon his shoulder, would say in a timid voice:

"What disturbeth thee, my dear lord?"

He would make no reply, or would burst into sobs; at last, one day, he confessed his horrible thought.

She combated it, arguing very forcibly: his father and mother were probably dead; if ever he should see them again, by what chance, for what purpose, would he perpetrate that abomination? Therefore, his fear was causeless, and he ought to hunt again.

Julian smiled as he listened to her, but could not determine to gratify her wish.

One evening in the month of August, when they were in their apartment, she had retired and he was kneeling to say his prayer, when he heard the yelping of a fox, then footsteps under the window; and he saw in the darkness

what seemed like the ghosts of animals. The temptation was too strong. He took down his quiver.

She seemed surprised.

"I do it to obey thee," he said; "at sunrise I shall return."

However, she dreaded some regrettable adventure.

He reassured her, then went forth, surprised by the inconstancy of her moods.

Soon after, a page appeared and announced that two strangers requested to see her ladyship at once, their lord being absent.

And soon an old man and an old woman entered the room, with bent figures, covered with dust, clad in coarse garments, and each leaning on a staff.

They took courage and declared that they brought Julian news of his parents.

She leaned from her bed to hear them. But having consulted each other with a glance, they asked her if he still loved them, if he ever spoke of them.

"Oh! yes!" she said.

Then they cried:

"Well! we are they!" and they sat down, being most weary and spent with fatigue.

There was nothing to convince the young woman that her husband was their son.

They proved it by describing peculiar marks which he had on his skin.

She leaped out of bed, called her page, and food was set before them.

Although they were very hungry, they could scarcely eat; and she furtively watched the trembling of their bony hands as they took the goblets.

They asked a thousand questions about Julian. She answered every one, but was careful to say nothing about the ghastly idea that concerned them.

When he did not return, they had left their castle; and they had been wandering about for several years, following vague clews, without losing hope. It had required so much money to pay toll, to cross the rivers,

and to live in inns, so much for the privileges of princes and the exactions of thieves, that their purse was empty and they were begging now. But what did it matter, since they would soon embrace their son? They extolled his good fortune in having so sweet a wife, and did not tire of gazing upon her and kissing her.

The magnificence of the apartment surprised them greatly; and the old man, having examined the walls, asked why the arms of the Emperor of Occitania were represented there.

She replied:

"He is my father."

Thereupon he started, recalling the prediction of the Bohemian, and the old woman thought of the words of the hermit. Doubtless the glory of her son was only the dawn of eternal splendour; and both sat, open-mouthed, beneath the radiance of the candles which lighted the table.

They had both been very handsome in their

youth. The mother still had all her hair, the smooth bands of which, like sheets of snow, hung down to the base of her cheeks; and the father, with his tall figure and his long beard, resembled a statue in a church.

Julian's wife urged them not to wait for him. She herself bestowed them in her bed, then closed the window. They fell asleep. The daylight was about to appear, and outside the window the little birds were beginning to sing.

Julian had crossed the park, and he strode through the forest with a nervous step, enjoying the elasticity of the turf and the softness of the air.

The shadows of the trees fell across the the moss. Here and there the moon made white spots in the clearing, and he hesitated to go forward, thinking that he saw a sheet of water, or else the placid surface of the ponds blended with the colour of the grass. Everywhere was profound silence; and he saw none

of the beasts which a few minutes before had been walking about his castle.

The forest grew more dense, the darkness became impenetrable. Puffs of hot wind reached him, full of enervating odours. He buried his feet in heaps of dead leaves, and he leaned against an oak to breathe a moment.

Suddenly, behind his back, sprang a blacker mass, a wild boar. Julian had not time to seize his bow, and he grieved over it as a calamity.

Then, having left the forest, he saw a wolf loping along a hedge.

Julian discharged an arrow at him. The wolf stopped, turned his head to look at him, and went on. He trotted along, keeping always at the same distance, stopped from time to time, and, as soon as he was aimed at, continued his flight.

Julian crossed in this way an interminable plain, then hills of sand, and found himself at last upon a plateau that overlooked a vast extent of country. Flat stones were scattered

about among ruined caverns. One stumbled over dead men's bones; here and there, worm-eaten crosses leaned this way and that, with a piteous air. But shapes moved about in the vague shadow of the tombs; hyenas appeared, terrified and panting. They came to him, their nails pattering on the flags, and smelt of him, yawning so that they showed their gums. He unsheathed his sword. They darted away at once in all directions, and disappeared with their rapid, limping gallop, beneath a cloud of dust in the distance.

An hour later he met in a ravine a savage bull, with lowered horns, digging up the sand with his hoofs. Julian struck him with his lance under the dewlap. It broke as if the animal had been of bronze; he closed his eyes, expecting death. When he opened them the bull had disappeared.

Thereupon his heart sank with shame. A mightier power neutralised his strength; and he turned back into the forest, to return home. It was choked by creeping plants;

and he was cutting them away with his sword, when a marten suddenly darted between his legs, a panther leaped over his shoulder, a serpent wound his way upward around an ash tree. Among its branches there was a monstrous jackdaw that stared at Julian; and here and there appeared a multitude of great sparks, as if the firmament had caused all its stars to rain down into the forest. They were the eyes of animals: wildcats, squirrels, owls, parrots, and monkeys.

Julian discharged his arrows at them; the arrows, with their feathers, rested on the leaves like white butterflies. He threw stones at them; the stones fell to the ground without touching anything. He cursed himself, tried to maltreat himself, uttered imprecations, was suffocated with rage.

And all the animals that he had hunted, reappeared, forming a narrow circle about him. Some were seated on their haunches, others standing at their full height. He re-

mained in the midst of them, frozen with terror, incapable of the slightest movement. With a supreme effort of his will, he took a step; those which were perching on the trees opened their wings; those which were on the ground set their limbs in motion; and all attended him.

The hyenas walked before, the wolf and the wild boar behind. The bull tossed his head at his right, and at his left the serpent glided through the grass; while the panther, arching his back, strode forward with a step soft as velvet. He walked as slowly as possible in order not to irritate them; and he saw porcupines, foxes, jackals, bears, and vipers emerge from the dense thickets.

Julian began to run; they ran. The serpent hissed, the putrid beasts foamed at the mouth. The wild boar touched his heels with his tusks, the wolf rubbed his nose against the palm of his hands. The monkeys pinched him, making horrible grimaces; the marten rolled at his feet. A bear struck off his hat

with a backward blow of his paw; and the panther scornfully dropped an arrow that she was carrying in her mouth.

Their sly manœuvres were instinct with irony. While watching him from the corners of their eyes, they seemed to be meditating a scheme of vengeance; and deafened by the buzzing of the insects, beaten by the tails of the birds, suffocated by the breaths of his escort, he walked on with outstretched arms and closed eyes, like a blind man, lacking even the strength to cry: "Mercy!"

The crow of a cock rang through the air, others answered it; it was daybreak; and he recognised above the orange-trees the roof of his palace.

Then, on the outskirts of a field, he saw within three yards red partridges fluttering amid the stubble. He unbuckled his cloak and threw it over them like a net. When he uncovered them, he found but a single one, and that had been dead a long while and was decayed.

This disappointment exasperated him more than all the rest. His thirst for carnage seized him once more; lacking beasts, he longed to slaughter men.

He climbed the three terraces, and burst open the door with a blow of his fist; but at the foot of the staircase the memory of his dear wife distended his heart. She was sleeping, no doubt, and he would surprise her.

Having removed his sandals, he turned the knob softly and entered.

The leaden divisions of the window dimmed the pale light of dawn. Julian stumbled over clothes upon the floor; a little farther on, he collided with a credence, still covered with plate.

"Doubtless she has eaten," he said to himself; and he walked towards the bed, which was lost in the darkness at the end of the room. When he reached it, in order to kiss his wife, he leaned over the pillow upon which lay the two heads, one beside the

other. Then he felt against his lips the touch of a beard.

He recoiled, thinking that he had gone mad; but he returned to the bed, and his fingers, feeling about, came in contact with hair which was very long. To convince himself of his mistake he slowly passed his hand over the pillow. It was surely a beard, and a man! A man in bed with his wife!

With an outburst of uncontrollable wrath, he leaped upon them with his dagger, and he stamped and fumed, roaring like a wild beast. Then he stopped. The dead, pierced to the heart, had not even stirred. He listened attentively to the two almost uniform death-rattles, and as they grew fainter and fainter, another breath, in the distance, continued them. Ill-defined at first, that plaintive, long-drawn voice approached, grew louder, became heartrending, and, terrified beyond measure, he recognised the braying of the great black stag.

As he turned, he fancied that he saw in the

doorway the ghost of his wife, with a light in her hand.

The tumult of the murder had attracted her. With one all-embracing glance she realised everything, and, flying from the room in horror, dropped her torch.

He picked it up.

His father and mother were before him, lying on their backs, each with a gaping wound in the breast; and their faces, majestic in their gentleness, seemed to guard it as an eternal secret. There were splashes and pools of blood on their white flesh, on the bed-clothes, on the floor, and on an ivory Christ hanging in the recess. The scarlet reflection of the stained glass, then bathed by the sun, lighted up those red spots and scattered others throughout the room. Julian walked towards the two bodies, saying to himself, striving to believe, that it was not possible, that he was mistaken, that one sometimes finds incomprehensible resemblances. Finally he stooped to look at the old man more

closely, and he saw between his partly closed eyelids a lifeless eye, which burned him like fire. Then he went to the other side of the bed, occupied by the other body, whose white hair concealed a part of the face. Julian passed his fingers under the hair, raised the head, and gazed at it, holding it at the end of his stiffened arm, while with the other hand he raised the torch to look. Drops of blood, soaking through the mattress, fell one by one to the floor.

At the close of the day he appeared before his wife, and in a voice different from his own, he bade her, first of all, not to answer him, not to approach him, not even to look at him, and to follow, under pain of damnation, all his orders, which were irrevocable.

The obsequies were to be carried out according to the instructions which he had left in writing, on a *prie-dieu* in the chamber of the dead. He abandoned to her his palace, his vassals, all his property, not even retaining the clothes that covered his body, and his

sandals, which she would find at the top of the staircase.

She had obeyed the will of God by making his crime possible, and it was her duty to pray for his soul, since thenceforth he ceased to exist.

The dead were buried magnificently in the chapel of a monastery three days' journey from the castle. A monk with lowered hood followed the procession, far from all the rest, and no one dared to speak to him.

He remained during the mass, lying prostrate in the centre of the doorway, with his arms stretched out like a crucifix, and his face in the dust.

After the burial, he was seen to take the road leading to the mountains. He turned several times, and at last disappeared.

III

HE went his way, begging his subsistence throughout the world.

He held out his hand to horsemen on the

highways, accosted harvest-makers with bent knee, or stood motionless behind the gates of courtyards; and his face was so sad that no one ever denied him alms.

In a spirit of humility, he would tell his story; then one and all would fly, making the sign of the cross. In villages through which he had once passed, as soon as he was recognised, the people closed their doors, shrieked threats at him, and hurled stones. The more charitable placed a bowl on the window-sill, then closed the shutters in order not to see him.

Repulsed everywhere, he avoided mankind; and he lived on roots, plants, tainted fruit, and shell-fish, which he sought along the shore.

Sometimes at an angle of the coast, he saw before his eyes a medley of crowded roofs, with stone weathercocks, bridges, towers, and a network of dark streets, from which rose to his ears a ceaseless humming. The longing to have a share in the existence of

other men impelled him to go down into the town. But the bestial expression of the faces, the uproar of the different trades, the indifference of men's speech froze his blood. On holidays, when the bells of the cathedral roused the spirits of the whole people at dawn, he watched them come forth from their houses; then the dances on the public squares, the fountains of beer at the street corners, the damask hangings in front of the abodes of princes; and when night had come, he saw through the windows of the ground floors, the long family tables where grandfathers held grandchildren on their knees; then sobs suffocated him and he returned to the fields.

He contemplated with outbursts of love the colts frisking in the grass, the birds in their nests, the insects on the flowers; at his approach one and all fled, concealed themselves in fright, or flew rapidly away.

He sought solitary places. But the wind brought to his ears sounds like the death-rat-

tle; the tears of the dew falling to the ground recalled to his mind other, heavier drops. The sun every evening streaked the clouds with blood, and every night, in his dreams, he reënacted his parricide.

He made himself a haircloth shirt, with iron points. He ascended on his knees all the hills which had a chapel at the top. But that pitiless thought obscured the splendour of tabernacles, and tortured him despite the macerations of his penance.

He did not rebel against God, who had inflicted that deed upon him, and yet he was desperate at the thought that he had been capable of committing it.

He had such a horror of his own person, that, hoping to deliver himself from it, he plunged into dangers. He saved paralytics from fire, children from deep ravines. The abyss spurned him, the flames spared him.

Time did not allay his suffering. It became intolerable. He resolved to die.

And one day when he found himself on the

shore of a lake, as he leaned over to judge of the depth of the water, he saw opposite him a fleshless old man, with a white beard, and of so piteous an aspect that it was impossible for him to keep back his tears. The other also wept. Not recognising his face, Julian remembered vaguely a face resembling it. He uttered a cry; it was his father; and he ceased to think of killing himself.

Thus, bearing the burden of his memory, he travelled through many countries, and he reached a stream, the passage of which was perilous because of its violence, and because there was a large tract of miry ground along its banks. For a long time no one had dared to cross it.

An old boat, buried at the stern, raised its bow among the reeds. Julian, on examining it, discovered a pair of oars, and the idea came to him of employing his life in the service of other men.

He began by building on the shore a sort of roadway which made it possible to go

down to the stream; and he broke his nails moving huge stones, held them against his breast to carry them, slipped in the mire, sank in it, and nearly perished more than once.

Then he repaired the boat with driftwood, and built himself a hovel with clay and trunks of trees.

The possibility of crossing becoming known, travellers appeared. They called him from the other shore by waving flags. Julian would at once jump into his boat. It was very heavy, and they overloaded it with all sorts of baggage and freight, to say nothing of the beasts of burden, which added to the weight of the load by their terrified plunging. He asked nothing for his labour; some gave him scraps of food which they took from their wallets, or worn-out clothes which they no longer wanted. Brutal men uttered fierce oaths. Julian gently reproved them and they retorted with insults. He contented himself by blessing them.

A small table, a stool, a bed of dead leaves, and three clay cups — such was the whole of his furniture. Two holes in the wall served as windows. On one side arid plains stretched away as far as the eye could see, with stagnant ponds here and there; and the great river rolled its greenish waves before his door. In the spring the damp earth gave forth an odour of corruption. Then a violent wind would raise eddies of dust, which entered everywhere, muddied the water, made the mouth gritty. A little later there were clouds of mosquitoes, whose buzzing and stinging ceased neither day nor night. Then came bitter frosts, which gave to everything the rigidity of stone, and aroused a frantic longing to eat meat.

Months passed when Julian did not see a living soul. Often he closed his eyes, trying to return in thought to his youthful days; and the courtyard of a castle would appear to him, with greyhounds on the porch, footmen in the armoury, and beneath an arbour of vines, a fair-haired youth between an old man

wrapped in furs and a lady with a huge cap; then of a sudden, the two corpses took their places. He would throw himself face downward on his bed, and exclaim, weeping:

"Oh! my poor father! my poor mother! my poor mother!" And he would fall into a comatose state, in which the ghastly visions continued.

One night, when he was asleep, he thought he heard some one call him. He listened intently and could hear only the moaning of the waves.

But the same voice repeated:

"Julian!"

It came from the other shore, which seemed to him most strange, in view of the breadth of the river.

A third time came the call:

"Julian!"

And that loud voice had the ring of a church bell.

Having lighted his lantern, he left the hut. A fierce tempest filled the night. The dark-

ness was profound, here and there broken by the foamy tops of the surging waves.

After a moment's hesitation, Julian cast off the cable. Instantly the water became smooth, the boat glided across and reached the other bank, where a man was waiting.

He was enveloped in a tattered cloak, his face was like a mask of plaster, and his eyes redder than coals. When he raised the lantern to his face, Julian saw that it was covered with hideous leprosy; and yet there was in his attitude a kingly majesty.

As soon as he entered the boat, it sank tremendously, borne down by his weight; a wave brought it to the surface again and Julian began to row.

At every stroke of the oars, the surf raised the bow. The water, blacker than ink, raced madly on both sides of the vessel. It dug abysses, it reared mountains, and the frail barque rose upon them, then plunged down into the depths, where it whirled about, tossed to and fro by the wind.

Julian bent his body, stretched his arms, and, bracing himself with his feet, threw himself back with a sudden wrench of his frame, in order to exert greater strength. The hail stung his hands, the rain poured down his back, the fierce gusts of wind took his breath away, and he stopped. Thereupon the boat was carried to leeward. But realising that he had in hand an affair of importance, an order which he must not disobey, he bent to his oars once more, and the rattling of the thole-pins mingled with the uproar of the tempest.

The little lantern burned before him. At intervals birds flying by concealed it. But he could always see the eyes of the Leper, who stood at the stern, as motionless as a statue.

And that lasted a long time, a very long time.

When they reached the hut, Julian closed the door, and saw him sitting on the stool. The species of shroud which covered him had fallen to his hips; and his shoulders, his breast, his thin arms, were hidden by a

multitude of scaly pustules. Huge wrinkles ploughed his forehead. Like a skeleton, he had a hole in the place of his nose, and his bluish lips gave forth a breath as thick as mist, and nauseating.

"I am hungry!" he said.

Julian gave him all that he possessed, an old piece of pork and a crust of black bread.

When he had devoured them, the table, the plate, and the knife-hilt bore the same marks that could be seen on his body.

Then he said:

"I am thirsty!"

Julian went to fetch his pitcher, and as he took it up, there came from it an aroma which delighted his heart and his nostrils. It was wine! what a find! But the Leper put out his hand, and emptied the pitcher at a draught.

Then he said:

"I am cold!"

Julian, with his candle, lighted a bunch of dried heather in the middle of the cabin.

The Leper went to it to warm himself; and cowering before it, he trembled in every limb, and sank to the floor; his eyes no longer gleamed, his ulcers burst, and in an almost inaudible voice, he murmured:

"Thy bed!"

Julian gently assisted him to drag himself to it, and even stretched over him, to cover him, the sail of his boat.

The Leper groaned, the corners of his mouth drooped and disclosed his teeth; his breast rose and fell with the quickening of his rattling breath, and his stomach sank to his spine with every breath that he drew.

Then he closed his eyes.

"It is as if my bones were ice! Come beside me!"

And Julian, raising the sail, lay down upon the dead leaves, close beside him.

The Leper turned his head.

"Undress thyself, so that I may have the warmth of thy body!"

Julian removed his clothes; then, as naked

as on the day of his birth, he took his place again in the bed; and he felt against his flesh the skin of the Leper, colder than a serpent and rough as a file.

He tried to encourage him; and the other replied, panting for breath:

"Ah! I am dying! Come nearer, and warm me! Not with thy hands! no! with thy whole body!"

Julian stretched himself out, mouth to mouth, breast to breast.

Then the Leper embraced him, and his eyes suddenly assumed the brilliancy of stars; his hair grew long like the rays of the sun; the breath of his nostrils was as sweet as the perfume of roses; a cloud of incense rose from the hearth, and the waves sang. Meanwhile, a superabundance of ecstasy, a superhuman joy descended like a flood into the soul of the enraptured Julian; and he whose arms enfolded him grew and grew in stature, until his head and his feet touched the two walls of the cabin. The roof vanished and

the firmament appeared; and Julian ascended towards the blue expanse, face to face with our Lord Jesus, who bore him upward to Heaven.

Such is the story of Saint Julian the Hospitaller, as it is found written on the stained-glass windows of a church in my province.

1876.

Herodias

Herodias

I

THE citadel of Machærus stood on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, on a cone-shaped basaltic peak. Four deep valleys surrounded it, two on the sides, one in front, the fourth behind. Houses clustered about its base, within the enclosure formed by a wall which rose and fell with the undulations of the ground; and by a zigzag road, hewn in the rock, the town was connected with the fortress, whose walls were one hundred and twenty cubits high, with many angles, battlements on the edge, and here and there towers, forming the ornamentation, as it were, of that crown of stone, suspended over the abyss.

Within there was a palace, adorned with porticoes and sheltered by a terrace, about

which ran a balustrade of sycamore-wood, with tall poles arranged to hold a tent.

One morning, before dawn, the Tetrarch Herod Antipas leaned on the balustrade and looked forth.

Immediately beneath him the mountains were beginning to show their peaks, while their dense masses, to the lowest depths of the ravines, were still in shadow. The hovering mist was rent asunder, and the outlines of the Dead Sea appeared. The dawn, breaking behind Machærus, diffused a reddish light. Soon it illuminated the sands on the shore, the hills, the desert, and, farther away, all the mountains of Judea, with their jagged gray slopes. En-Gedi, in the centre, formed a black bar; Hebron, in the background, was rounded like a dome; Eshtaol was covered with pomegranates, Sorek with vineyards, Carmel with fields of sesame; and the Tower of Antonia, with its monstrous cube, dominated Jerusalem. The Tetrarch turned his eyes to the right, to gaze upon the palm-trees of Jericho; and he

thought of the other cities of his Galilee: Capernaum, Endor, Nazareth, Tiberias, whither perhaps he would never go again. Meanwhile the Jordan flowed through the barren plain. All white, it was as dazzling as a field of snow. Now the lake seemed to be of lapis lazuli; and at its southern point, in the direction of Yemen, Antipas saw what he dreaded to see. Brown tents were scattered here and there; men with lances went to and fro among the horses; and dying fires gleamed like sparks, level with the ground.

They were the troops of the King of the Arabs, whose daughter he had cast aside to take Herodias, wife to one of his brothers, who lived in Italy with no pretension to power.

Antipas was awaiting succour from the Romans; and as Vitellius, Governor of Syria, did not appear, he was consumed with impatience.

Doubtless Agrippa had ruined him in the mind of the Emperor? Philip, his third

brother, sovereign of Batanea, was secretly arming. The Jews would have no more of his idolatrous customs, nor all the rest of his domineering sway; so that he was hesitating between two plans: to beguile the Arabs, or to enter into an alliance with the Parthians; and, on the pretext of celebrating his birthday, he had bidden to a great banquet, for that very day, the leaders of his troops, the stewards of his estates, and the chief men of Galilee. With a keen glance he scanned all the roads. They were empty. Eagles flew over his head; the soldiers were sleeping against the walls, along the rampart; nothing stirred within the castle.

Of a sudden a voice in the distance, as if escaping from the bowels of the earth, made the Tetrarch turn pale. He leaned forward to listen; it had ceased. It began again, and he clapped his hands and called:

"Mannæus! Mannæus!"

A man appeared, naked to the waist, like the masseurs at baths. He was very tall,

aged, fleshless, and wore at his hip a cutlass in a copper sheath. His hair, brushed back and held in place by a comb, exaggerated the height of his brow. His eyes were dull with drowsiness, but his teeth gleamed and his toes rested lightly on the flagstones, his whole body having the suppleness of a monkey and his face the impassiveness of a mummy.

"Where is he?" asked the Tetrarch.

Mannæus replied, pointing with his thumb to something behind them:

"There! still there!"

"I thought that I heard him!"

And Antipas, having drawn a long breath of relief, inquired concerning Iaokanann, the same man whom the Latins called St. John the Baptist. Had those two men been seen again who had been admitted as a favour to his dungeon some months before; and had the purpose with which they had come been learned since?

Mannæus replied:

"They exchanged some words with him in

secret, like thieves at a cross-roads in the night. Then they went away towards Upper Galilee, announcing that they were the bearers of great tidings."

Antipas hung his head, then exclaimed in a tone of alarm:

"Keep him! keep him! And let no one enter! Lock the door fast! Cover the hole! None must even suspect that he lives!"

Before receiving these orders Mannæus had carried them out; for laokanann was a Jew; and, like all Samaritans, he abhorred the Jews.

Their temple of Gerizim, intended by Moses to be the centre of Israel, had ceased to exist since the time of King Hyrcanus; and that of Jerusalem drove them to frenzy as an outrage and a lasting injustice. Mannæus had made his way into it in order to sully the altar with dead men's bones. His confederates, less swift of foot than he, had been beheaded.

He saw it in the gap between two hills. Its white marble walls and the golden lines of its roof shone resplendent in the sun. It was

like a luminous mountain—something superhuman, crushing all else by its magnificence and its pride.

Then he extended his arms towards Zion; and, standing erect, with head thrown back and fists clenched, he hurled a malediction at it, believing that words had real power.

Antipas listened and did not seem shocked.

The Samaritan continued:

"At times he becomes excited, he longs to fly, he hopes for a rescue. At other times he has the tranquil aspect of a sick beast; or else I see him walking to and fro in the darkness, saying: 'What matters it? That He may grow great, I must needs shrink!'"

Antipas and Mannæus glanced at each other. But the Tetrarch was weary of reflection.

All those mountains about him, like terraces of huge petrified waves, the black ravines on the sides of the cliffs, the immensity of the blue vault, the brilliant glamour of the day, the depth of the abysses, disturbed him; and a wave of desolation swept over him at the

spectacle of the desert, which, in the upheavals of its surface, formed amphitheatres and ruined palaces. The hot wind brought, with the odour of sulphur, an exhalation, as it were, from the accursed cities, buried lower than the banks beneath the heavy waters of the lake. These tokens of an immortal wrath brought dismay to his mind; and he stood, with both elbows on the balustrade, staring eyes, and his hands pressed against his temples. Some one touched him. He turned. Herodias stood before him.

A light purple robe covered her to the sandals. Having come forth hurriedly from her chamber, she wore neither necklace nor earrings; a tress of her black hair fell over one arm, and its end was lost to sight between her breasts. Her two open nostrils throbbed; a joyous expression of triumph lighted up her face; and in a loud voice, shaking the Tetrarch's arm, she said:

"Cæsar loves us! Agrippa is in prison!"

"Who told you so?"

"I know it."

She added:

"It is for having aspired to Caius's[1] empire!"

While living on their alms, he had schemed to obtain the title of king, which they, like him, coveted. But in the future no more fear! "Tiberius's dungeons are hard to open, and sometimes life is not secure therein!"

Antipas understood her; and, although she was Agrippa's sister, her atrocious purpose seemed to him justified. Such murders were a consequence of the state of affairs, a fatality attached to royal families. In Herod's they had become too numerous to count.

Then she set forth her plan: clients bought, letters discovered, spies at every door; and how she had succeeded in seducing Eutyches the denouncer. "Nothing deterred me! Have I not done even more for you? I have abandoned my daughter!"

After her divorce she had left the child in

[1] The Emperor Caligula.—[Trans.]

Rome, hoping to have others by the Tetrarch. She never mentioned her. He wondered why that outburst of affection.

The tent had been spread, and huge cushions were speedily brought to them. Herodias sank upon them and wept, turning her head to him. Then she passed her hand over her eyes, said that she proposed to think no more about it, that she was happy; and she recalled to his mind their chats yonder in the atrium, their meetings at the baths, their strolls along the Via Sacra, and the evenings at the great villas, amid the plashing of fountains, beneath arches of flowers, by the Roman Campagna. She gazed at him as of yore, rubbing against his breast, with cajoling gestures. He pushed her away. The love that she tried to kindle was so far away now! And all his misfortunes had flowed from it; for war had raged well-nigh twelve years. It had aged the Tetrarch. His shoulders were bent; in his sad-coloured toga with a violet border, his white hair blended with his beard,

and the sun, shining through the veil, bathed with light his troubled brow. Herodias's too was wrinkled; and, seated face to face, they eyed each other fiercely.

The roads over the mountain began to be peopled. Herdsmen drove their cattle, children dragged donkeys along, grooms led horses. Those who descended the heights above Machærus disappeared behind the castle; others ascended the ravine opposite, and, having reached the town, discharged their burdens in the courtyards. They were the Tetrarch's purveyors, and servants preceding his guests.

But, at the foot of the terrace, on the left, an Essene appeared, in a white robe, barefooted, with a stoical air. Mannæus, on the right, rushed forward, brandishing his cutlass.

"Kill him!" cried Herodias.

"Hold!" said the Tetrarch.

He stood still; the other did likewise.

Then they withdrew, each by a different stairway, walking backward, keeping their eyes fixed on each other.

"I know him!" said Herodias; "his name is Phanuel, and he seeks speech with Iaokanann, since you are blind enough to spare his life!"

Antipas suggested that he might some day be of use. His attacks upon Jerusalem would win to their side the rest of the Jews.

"No!" she said; "they accept all masters and are not capable of forming a fatherland!" As for him who stirred the people with hopes never lost since the days of Nehemiah, the best policy was to suppress him.

There was no need of haste in the Tetrarch's opinion. Iaokanann dangerous! Folly! he feigned to laugh at the idea.

"Hold your peace!" And she repeated the tale of her humiliation one day when she was going towards Gilead to gather balsam. People were putting on their clothes on the bank of a stream. On a low hill near by a man was speaking. He had a camel's skin about his loins, and his head resembled a lion's. "As soon as he saw me he spit out

at me all the maledictions of the prophets. His eyes shot fire; his voice roared; he raised his arms as if to tear the thunder from on high. Impossible to fly! the wheels of my chariot were buried in sand to the axles; and I drove away slowly, sheltering myself beneath my cloak, my blood congealed by those insults, which fell like a shower of rain."

Iaokanann made life impossible to her. When he was taken and bound with cords, the soldiers were ordered to stab him if he resisted; he was as gentle as a lamb. They had put serpents in his dungeon; they were dead.

The futility of these tricks drove Herodias mad. Besides, what was the cause of his war against her? What interest guided him? His harangues, delivered to crowds, were circulated, spread abroad; she heard them everywhere, they filled the air. Against legions she would have been stout of heart. But that power, more harmful than the sword, and intangible, was stupefying, and she paced

the terrace, livid with wrath, lacking words to express the passion that suffocated her.

She reflected, too, that the Tetrarch, yielding to public opinion, would perhaps deem it best to cast her off. In that case all would be lost! From childhood she had cherished the dream of mighty empire. It was to attain it that, deserting her first husband, she had allied herself to this one, who, she thought, had deceived her.

"I obtained a powerful support when I entered your family!"

"It is equal to yours!" rejoined the Tetrarch, simply.

Herodias felt the blood of the priests and kings who were her ancestors boiling in her veins.

"But your grandfather swept the temple of Ascalon! The others were shepherds, bandits, heads of caravans, a wandering horde, subject to Judah from the time of King David! All my ancestors vanquished yours! The first of the Maccabees drove you forth from He-

bron; Hyrcanus forced you to be circumcised!" And, giving vent to the patrician's scorn for the plebeian, Jacob's hatred of Edom,[1] she reproached him for his indifference to insults, for his mildness towards the Phœnicians, who betrayed him, his cowardly subservience to the people, who detested him. "You are like them, admit it! And you sigh for the Arab girl who danced around the stones! Take her! Go, live with her, in her canvas house! feed on her bread cooked in the ashes! drink the curdled milk of her sheep! kiss her blue cheeks! and forget me!"

The Tetrarch was no longer listening. He was gazing at the roof of a house, on which there was a young girl, and an old woman holding a parasol with a reed handle as long as a fisher's line. In the centre of the rug stood a great travelling-basket, open. Girdles, veils, jewels overflowed from it in a confused mass. Now and again the girl stooped to-

[1] Esau.—[Trans.]

wards those objects and shook them in the air. She was dressed like the Roman women, in a wrinkled tunic, with a peplum adorned with emerald tassels; and blue bands confined her hair, which was doubtless too heavy, for from time to time she put her hand to it. The shadow of the parasol hovered above her, half hiding her. Twice or thrice Antipas caught a glimpse of her shapely neck, the corner of an ear, or of a tiny mouth. But he saw her whole figure, from the hips to the neck, as she bent forward and drew herself up again with supple grace. He watched for the repetition of that movement, and his breath came faster; flames kindled in his eyes. Herodias observed him.

He asked: "Who is she?"

She answered that she had no knowledge, and left him, suddenly appeased.

The Tetrarch was awaited under the porticoes by the Galileans, the master of the writings, the chief of the pasturage, the director of the salt-wells, and a Jew of Babylon, in

command of his horsemen. All hailed him with loud acclamations. Then he vanished towards the inner chambers.

Phanuel appeared at the angle of a passage.

"Ah! again? You came to see Iaokanann doubtless?"

"And you! I have to tell you something of moment."

And, following Antipas, he entered, at his heels, a dark apartment.

The light entered through a barred opening that extended along the wall under the cornice. The walls were painted a dark pomegranate colour, almost black. At the end stood an ebony bed, with cords of ox-hide. A golden buckler, above, gleamed like a sun.

Antipas walked the whole length of the room, and lay down on the bed.

Phanuel was standing. He raised his arm, and said in the attitude of one inspired:

"The Most High sends one of his sons to earth now and again. Iaokanann is such an

one. If you oppress him you will be punished."

"It is he who persecutes me!" cried Antipas. "He demanded of me an impossible act. Since then he has rent me. And I was not harsh at the beginning! He has even sent forth from Machærus men who overturn my provinces. A curse upon his life! Since he attacks me, I defend myself!"

"His fits of anger are too violent," replied Phanuel. "No matter! He must be set free."

"One does not set free raging beasts!" said the Tetrarch.

"Have no fear," the Essene replied. "He will go hence to the Arabs, the Gauls, the Scythians. His work is destined to reach to the ends of the earth!"

Antipas seemed lost in a vision.

"His power is mighty! Against my will, I love him."

"Then let him be free!"

The Tetrarch shook his head. He feared Herodias, Mannæus, and the unknown.

Phanuel strove to persuade him, alleging as a guaranty of his plans the submission of the Essenes to the King. People respected those poor men, unconquerable by torture, always clad in flax, and able to read the future in the stars.

Antipas recalled the words he had let fall a moment before.

"What is this thing which you said was of moment?"

A negro appeared. His body was white with dust. He gasped for breath and could only say:

"Vitellius!"

"What! has he arrived?"

"I saw him. Within three hours he will be here!"

The portières at the doors of the corridors were separated as by the wind. A busy hum filled the castle, a tumult of people running to and fro, of furniture being dragged about, of silver plate falling to the floor; and from the towers trumpets sounded, to call the scattered slaves.

II

THE ramparts were thronged with people when Vitellius entered the courtyard. He was leaning on his interpreter's arm, followed by a great red litter adorned with plumes and mirrors; he wore the toga, the laticlave, the buskins of a consul, and his person was surrounded by lictors.

They leaned against the door their twelve fasces — staves bound together by a strap, with an axe in the centre. Thereupon one and all trembled before the majesty of the Roman people.

The litter, borne by eight men, stopped. Then stepped forth a youth with a fat paunch, a blotched face, and pearls along his fingers. He was offered a glass of wine and spices. He drank it and demanded a second.

The Tetrarch had fallen at the Proconsul's feet, grieved, he said, that he had not been sooner informed of the favour of his presence. Otherwise he would have ordered that what-

ever the Vitellii might require should await them along the roads. They were descended from the goddess Vitellia. A road leading from Janiculum to the sea still bore their name. Quæstorships and consulships were innumerable in the family; and as for Lucius, now his guest, they owed thanks to him as the conqueror of the Cliti and as the father of the young Aulus,[1] who seemed to be returning to his own domain, since the Orient was the fatherland of the gods.

These hyperbolical compliments were delivered in Latin. Vitellius accepted them impassively.

He replied that the great Herod sufficed to make a nation glorious. The Athenians had entrusted to him the management of the Olympic games. He had built temples in honour of Augustus, had been patient, ingenious, awe-inspiring, and always loyal to the Cæsars.

Between the pillars, with their brazen capi-

[1] Afterwards the Emperor Vitellius.—[Trans.]

tals, Herodias was seen, advancing with the air of an empress, amid women and eunuchs carrying burning perfumes on silver-gilt salvers.

The Proconsul took three steps to meet her; and, having saluted him with an inclination of the head:

"What joy!" she cried; "henceforth, Agrippa, the enemy of Tiberius, is powerless to do harm!"

He knew nothing of the event; it seemed to him perilous; and as Antipas swore that he would do everything for the Emperor, Vitellius added: "Even to the injury of others?"

He had taken hostages from the King of the Parthians, and the Emperor had forgotten it; for Antipas, being present at the conference, to give himself importance, had instantly despatched the news. Hence a deep-rooted hatred, and delay in sending succour.

The Tetrarch stammered, but Aulus said, laughing:

"Fear not; I will protect you!"

The Proconsul pretended not to have heard. The father's fortune depended on the son's debasement; and that flower from the mire of Capræ procured him advantages so considerable that he encompassed it with attentions, distrusting it all the while because it was poisonous.

A tumult arose beneath the gate. A file of white mules was led in, ridden by persons in priestly costume. They were Sadducees and Pharisees, led to Machærus by the same object of ambition, the first wishing to obtain the honourable post of sacrificer, the others to retain it. Their faces were dark, especially those of the Pharisees, foes of Rome and of the Tetrarch. The skirts of their tunics embarrassed them in the press; and their tiaras rested insecurely on their brows, above bands of parchment, whereon words were written.

At almost the same time some soldiers of the vanguard arrived. They had placed their shields in bags, to protect them from the dust; and behind them was Marcellus, lieu-

tenant to the Proconsul, with publicans carrying tablets of wood under their armpits.

Antipas named the principal persons of his suite: Tolmai, Kanthera, Sebon, Ammonius, of Alexandria, who bought asphalt for him, Naaman, captain of his velites, and Jacim the Babylonian.

Vitellius had observed Mannæus.

"Who is that man?"

The Tetrarch, with a gesture, gave him to understand that he was the executioner.

Then he presented the Sadducees.

Jonathas, a small man of free manners, speaking Greek, begged the master to honour them by a visit to Jerusalem.—He would probably go thither.

Eleazar, with hooked nose and long beard, demanded for the Pharisees the cloak of the high priest, detained in the Tower of Antonia by the civil authorities.

Then the Galileans denounced Pontius Pilate. Taking advantage of the act of a madman who was seeking David's vessel of gold

in a cave near Samaria, he had killed some of the inhabitants. And they all spoke at once, Mannæus with more violence than the others. Vitellius declared that the criminals should be punished.

Loud exclamations arose in front of a portico where the soldiers had hung their shields. The coverings being removed, there was seen on the bosses the image of Cæsar. That, to the Jews, was idolatry. Antipas harangued them, while Vitellius, from an elevated seat on the colonnade, looked on in amazement at their wrath. Tiberius had done well to banish four hundred of them to Sardinia. But at home they were strong; and he ordered the bucklers to be removed.

Thereupon they surrounded the Proconsul, imploring reparation for injustice, privileges, alms. Clothes were torn, they trampled upon one another; and, to make room, slaves struck right and left with staves. Those nearest the gateway went down to the road; others ascended it; the tide flowed back; two currents

met in that mass of men, which swayed back and forth, hemmed in by the encircling walls.

Vitellius asked why there were so many people. Antipas told him the reason: his birthday festival; and he pointed out several of his people, who leaned over the battlements, lowering enormous baskets of meat, fruit, vegetables, antelopes and storks, large sky-blue fish, grapes, melons, pomegranates arranged in pyramids. Aulus could not restrain himself. He rushed towards the kitchen, impelled by that gluttony which was destined to surprise the universe.

Passing a cave, he saw stew-pans like cuirasses. Vitellius came to look at them, and demanded that the underground rooms of the fortress should be opened for him.

They were hewn in the rock, with high vaulted roofs, and pillars at intervals. The first contained old armour, but the second was filled to overflowing with pikes, all their points protruding from a bouquet of plumes. The third seemed to be hung with mats of

reeds, the slender arrows were arranged so straightly side by side. Scimitar-blades covered the walls of the fourth. In the centre of the fifth, rows of helmets, with their crests, formed as it were a battalion of red serpents. In the sixth naught could be seen save quivers; in the seventh, naught but military boots; in the eighth, naught but armlets; in those following, pitchforks, grappling-irons, ladders, ropes, and even poles for catapults, even bells for the breastplates of dromedaries! And as the mountain grew larger at its base, and was hollowed out within like a beehive, beneath these rooms there were others more numerous and deeper.

Vitellius, Phineas his interpreter, and Sisenna, the leader of the publicans, walked through them by the light of torches borne by three eunuchs.

In the shadow they distinguished hideous objects invented by the barbarians : head-crushers studded with nails, javelins that poisoned the wounds they made, pincers

resembling a crocodile's jaws; in a word, the Tetrarch had in store in Machærus munitions of war for forty thousand men.

He had gathered them in anticipation of an alliance of his enemies. But the Proconsul might believe, or say, that it was to fight against the Romans, and the Tetrarch sought explanations.

They were not his; many were used for protection against brigands; moreover, they were needed against the Arabs; or else, they had all belonged to his father. And, instead of walking behind the Proconsul, he went before, at a rapid pace. Then he stood against the wall, which he covered with his toga, holding his elbows away from his sides; but the top of a door appeared above his head. Vitellius noticed it and wished to know what was on the other side.

The Babylonian alone could open it.

"Call the Babylonian!"

They awaited his coming.

His father had come from the shores of the

Euphrates, to offer his services to Herod the Great, with four hundred horsemen, to defend the eastern frontier. After the partition of the kingdom, Jacim had remained in Philip's service, and now served Antipas.

He appeared, with a bow over his shoulder, a whip in his hand. Cords of many colours were tied tightly about his crooked legs. His huge arms emerged from a sleeveless tunic, and a fur cap cast its shadow over his face, which bore a beard curled in rings.

At first he seemed not to understand the interpreter. But Vitellius cast a glance at Antipas, who instantly repeated his command. Thereupon Jacim placed both his hands against the door. It glided into the wall.

A breath of hot air came forth from the darkness. A winding path sloped downward; they followed it and reached the entrance to a grotto, of greater extent than the other underground apartments.

At the rear there was an arched opening

over the precipice, which defended the citadel on that side. The blossoms of a honeysuckle that clung to the wall hung downward in the bright light of day. Along the ground trickled a murmuring thread of water.

There were white horses there, a hundred perhaps, eating barley from a board on a level with their mouths. All had their manes painted blue, their hoofs in bags of esparto, and the hair between the ears curled over the frontal bone, like a wig. With their very long tails they lazily lashed their legs. The Proconsul was struck dumb with admiration.

They were marvellous creatures, supple as serpents, light as birds. They would keep pace with their riders' arrows, overturn men and bite them in the abdomen, traverse the mountainous country with ease, leap ravines, and continue their wild gallop over the level ground through a whole day. A word would stop them. As soon as Jacim entered, they went to him, like sheep when the shepherd appears; and, stretching out their necks,

gazed at him restlessly with their childlike eyes. From habit, he uttered a hoarse cry from the bottom of his throat, which aroused their spirits; and they reared, hungry for space, begging leave to run.

Antipas, fearing that Vitellius might take them, had imprisoned them in that place, specially designed for animals in case of siege.

"It is a bad stable," said the Proconsul, "and you run the risk of losing them! Count them, Sisenna!"

The publican took a tablet from his girdle, counted the horses and wrote the number.

The agents of the fiscal companies bribed the provincial governors, in order to pillage the provinces. This one smelt everywhere, with his polecat's jaw and his blinking eyes.

At last they went up again to the court-yard.

Bronze shields, set in the pavement here and there, covered the cisterns. He noticed one larger than the rest, which had not their

sonority beneath the feet. He struck them all in turn, then shouted, stamping:

"I have it! I have it! Herod's treasure is here!"

The search for his treasure was a mania among the Romans.

It did not exist, the Tetrarch swore.

But what was there beneath?

"Nothing! a man, a prisoner."

"Show him to me!" said Vitellius.

The Tetrarch did not obey; the Jews would have learned his secret. His disinclination to raise the shield angered Vitellius.

"Break it in!" he shouted to the lictors.

Mannæus had divined what was happening. Seeing an axe, he thought that they were going to behead Iaokanann — and he stopped the lictor at the first blow on the bronze circle, inserted a sort of hook between it and the pavement, then, straightening his long, thin arms, slowly raised it; it opened, and all marvelled at the old man's strength. Beneath the wood-lined cover was a trap-

door of the same dimensions, At a blow of the fist it folded in two panels; then they saw a hole, a great ditch, surrounded by a staircase without a rail; and they who leaned over the brink saw at the bottom something indistinct and horrifying.

A human being lay on the ground, covered with long hair that mingled with the beast's hair that clothed his back. He rose; his brow touched a horizontal grating; and from time to time he disappeared in the depths of his den.

The sun gleamed on the points of the tiaras and on the sword-hilts, and heated the flagstones beyond measure; and doves, flying from the eaves, fluttered above the courtyard. It was the hour when Mannæus usually threw grain to them. He crouched before the Tetrarch, who stood beside Vitellius. The Galileans, the priests, the soldiers, formed a circle behind them; all held their peace, in agonising suspense as to what was about to happen.

First there was a profound sigh, uttered in a cavernous voice.

Herodias heard it at the other end of the palace. Overcome by a sort of fascination, she passed through the crowd; and with one hand on Mannæus's shoulder, and body bent forward, she listened.

The voice arose.

"Woe to you, Pharisees and Sadducees, generation of vipers, inflated skins, tinkling cymbals!"

They recognised Iaokanann. His name passed from mouth to mouth. Others hastened to the spot.

"Woe to you, O people! woe to the traitors of Judah, to the drunkards of Ephraim, to those who dwell in the fat valleys and who are overcome with wine!

"Let them fade away like the water that flows, like the snail that melts as it crawls, like the fœtus of a woman who does not see the sun.

"Thou must take refuge, O Moab, among

the cypresses like the sparrows, in caverns like the jerboa. The gates of the fortresses shall be rent asunder more easily than nut-shells, walls shall crumble, cities shall burn; and the scourge of the Eternal shall not rest. He shall turn your limbs about in your blood as wool is turned in the dyer's vat. He shall tear you like a new harrow; He shall scatter morsels of your flesh upon the mountains!"

Of what conqueror was he speaking? Was it of Vitellius? The Romans alone could effect such an extermination. Complaints arose:

"Enough! enough! let him finish!"

He continued, in a louder voice:

"Beside their mothers' dead bodies, little children shall drag themselves through the dust. You shall go at night to seek bread among the ruins, at the risk of sword thrusts. The jackals shall fight for your bones on the public squares, where the old men used to talk at evening. Your virgins, swallowing their tears, shall play the lute at the stranger's

feasts, and your bravest sons shall bend their backs, crushed by too heavy burdens!"

The people remembered their days of exile, all the calamities of their history. These were the words of the prophets of old. Iaokanann sent them forth, like mighty blows, one after another.

But the voice became sweet, melodious, musical. It proclaimed enfranchisement, splendid portents in the sky, the newly born, with an arm in the dragon's cavern, gold instead of clay, the desert blooming like a rose. "That which is now worth sixty talents will not cost an obol. Fountains of milk shall gush from the rocks; you shall sleep in the wine-presses, with full bellies!—When wilt Thou come, whose coming I await? In anticipation, all the peoples kneel, and Thy sway shall be eternal, O Son of David!"

The Tetrarch threw himself back, the existence of a Son of David affronting him like a threat.

Iaokanann anathematised him for his as-

sumption of royalty:—"There is no king save the Eternal!"—and for his gardens, his statues, his ivory furniture — like the impious Ahab!

Antipas broke the cord of the seal that hung upon his breast, and threw it into the hole, bidding him hold his peace.

The voice replied:

"I will cry aloud like the bear, like a wild ass, like a woman in labour!

"The punishment has already befallen thee in thy incest. God afflicts thee with the sterility of the mule."

And laughter arose, like the plashing of the waves.

Vitellius persisted in remaining. The interpreter, in an unmoved voice, repeated in the Roman tongue all the invectives that Iaokanann roared in his own. The Tetrarch and Herodias were forced to listen to them twice. He panted, while she, open-mouthed, watched the bottom of the hole.

The ghastly man threw back his head, and,

grasping the bars, pressed against them his face, which had the aspect of a tangled underbrush, and in which two coals of fire beamed.

"Ah! it is thou, Jezebel!

"Thou dost take his heart captive with the creaking of thy shoes. Thou didst neigh like a mare. Thou didst set thy bed on the mountains, to accomplish thy sacrifices!

"The Lord shall tear away thine earrings, thy purple robes, thy veils of fine linen, the circlets from thine arms, the rings from thy feet; and the little golden crescents that tremble on thy brow, thy silver mirrors, thy fans of ostrich feathers, the mother-of-pearl pattens that increase thy stature, the pride of thy diamonds, the perfumes of thy hair, the painting of thy nails—all the artifices of sensuality; and the stones shall be too few to stone the adulteress!"

She glanced about her for protection. The Pharisees hypocritically lowered their eyes. The Sadducees turned their faces away, fear-

ing to offend the Proconsul. Antipas seemed at the point of death.

The voice grew louder, took on new intonations, rolled hither and thither with a crashing as of thunder, and, repeated by the mountain echoes, struck Machærus with bolt after bolt.

"Stretch thyself in the dust, daughter of Babylon! Grind flour! Remove thy girdle, unloose thy shoes, truss up thy skirts, cross the rivers! Thy shame shall be laid bare, thine opprobrium shall be seen! thy sobs shall break thy teeth! The Eternal abhors the stench of thy crimes! Accursed! accursed! Die like a dog!"

The trap-door closed, the cover was lowered to its place. Mannæus wished to strangle Iaokanann.

Herodias vanished. The Pharisees were scandalised. Antipas, in their midst, defended himself.

"Doubtless," said Eleazar, "one may marry his brother's wife; but Herodias was not

widowed, and, moreover, she had a child, wherein lay the abomination."

"Not so! not so!" objected Jonathas the Sadducee. "The Law condemns such marriages, without proscribing them absolutely."

"It matters not! They are most unjust to me!" said Antipas; "for Absalom lay with his father's wives, Judah with his daughter-in-law, Ammon with his sister, Lot with his daughters."

Aulus, who had been sleeping, reappeared at that moment. When he was informed of the affair, he took sides with the Tetrarch. He should not be disturbed by such foolish ideas; and he laughed aloud at the reprobation of the priests and the frenzy of laokanann.

Herodias, on the steps, turned towards him.

"You are wrong, my master! He bids the people refuse to pay the tax."

"Is that true?" instantly asked the publican.

The answers were generally in the affirmative. The Tetrarch confirmed them.

Vitellius thought the prisoner might fly;

and, as Antipas's conduct seemed to him equivocal, he posted sentinels at the gates, along the walls, and in the courtyard.

Then he went to his apartment. The deputations of priests attended him.

Each one set forth his grievances, without broaching the question of the office of sacrificer.

One and all importuned him. He dismissed them.

Jonathas left him when he saw on the battlements Antipas talking with a man with long hair and in a white robe—an Essene; and he regretted having upheld him.

One thought afforded the Tetrarch consolation. Iaokanann was no longer at his disposal, the Romans had taken charge of him. What a relief! Phanuel was walking on the path around the battlements. He called him and said, pointing to the soldiers:

"They are stronger than I! I cannot set him free; it is not my fault!"

The courtyard was empty. The slaves

were at rest. Against the reddening sky, flame-coloured on the horizon, the smallest perpendicular objects were outlined in black. Antipas distinguished the salt-wells at the far end of the Dead Sea, and he no longer saw the tents of the Arabs. Doubtless they had gone. The moon rose; a feeling of peace descended upon his heart.

Phanuel, overwhelmed, stood with his chin upon his breast. At last he made known what he had to say.

Since the beginning of the month he had studied the sky before dawn, the constellation Perseus being at the zenith. Agalah was hardly visible, Algol shone less brightly, Mira-Cœti had disappeared, whence he augured the death of a man of mark, that very night, in Machærus.

Who? Vitellius was too well guarded. Iaokanann would not be executed. "Then it is I!" thought the Tetrarch.

Perhaps the Arabs would return. The Proconsul might discover his relations with the

Parthians! Hired assassins from Jerusalem escorted the priests; they had daggers under their garments, and the Tetrarch did not doubt Phanuel's learning.

He conceived the idea of having recourse to Herodias. He hated her, however. But she would give him courage, and all the bonds were not broken of the spell she had formerly cast upon him.

When he entered her chamber, cinnamon was smouldering in a bowl of porphyry; and powders, unguents, fabrics like clouds, embroideries lighter than feathers, were scattered about.

He did not mention Phanuel's prediction, or his dread of the Jews and Arabs; she would have accused him of cowardice. He spoke of the Romans only. Vitellius had confided to him none of his military projects. He supposed him to be a friend of Caius, with whom Agrippa consorted, and he would be sent into exile, or perhaps he would be murdered.

Herodias, with indulgent contempt, tried to

encourage him. At last she took from a small casket a curious medallion adorned with Tiberius's profile. That was enough to make the lictors turn pale and to base accusations upon.

Antipas, touched with gratitude, asked her how she had obtained it.

"It was given me," she replied.

Beneath a portière opposite, a bare arm protruded, a lovely, youthful arm, that might have been carved in ivory by Polycletus. Somewhat awkwardly, and yet with grace, it felt about in the air, trying to grasp a tunic left upon a stool near the wall.

An old woman silently passed it to her, pulling aside the curtain.

The Tetrarch remembered the face, but could not place it.

"Is that slave yours?"

"What matters it to you?" replied Herodias.

III

THE guests filled the banquet-hall.

It had three naves, like a basilica, separated by pillars of algum wood, with bronze capitals covered with carvings. Two galleries with openwork balustrades overhung it; and a third, in gold filagree, jutted out at one end, opposite an immense arch.

Candelabra burning on long tables extending the whole length of the hall formed bushes of fire, between cups of painted clay and copper platters, cubes of snow and heaps of grapes; but those red gleams one after another were lost in space because of the height of the ceiling, and points of light twinkled, like the stars at night, through the branches. Through the opening of the vast arch, one could see torches on the terraces of the houses; for Antipas feasted his friends, his subjects, and all who had presented themselves.

Slaves, as active as dogs, and with their feet encased in sandals of felt, went to and fro, carrying salvers.

The proconsular table stood upon a platform built of sycamore boards, beneath the gilded tribune. Tapestries from Babylon enclosed it in a sort of pavilion.

Three ivory couches, one opposite the door and one on either side, held Vitellius, his son, and Antipas; the Proconsul being next the door, at the left, Aulus at the right, the Tetrarch in the centre.

He wore a heavy black cloak, whose texture was invisible beneath layers of dye-stuffs; he had paint on his cheek-bones, his beard trimmed like a fan, and azure powder on his hair, surmounted by a diadem of precious stones. Vitellius retained his purple baldric, which he wore diagonally over a linen tunic. Aulus had the sleeves of his robe of violet silk, shot with silver, tied at his back. The long spiral curls of his hair formed terraces, and a necklace of sapphires sparkled on his breast, which was as plump and white as a woman's. Beside him, on a mat, with legs crossed, sat a very beautiful boy, who smiled

incessantly. He had seen him in the kitchen, could not live without him, and having difficulty in remembering his Chaldean name, called him simply the "Asiatic." From time to time he stretched himself out on the triclinium. Then his bare feet overlooked the assemblage.

On one side there were the priests and officers of Antipas, people from Jerusalem, the chief men of the Greek cities; and, under the Proconsul, Marcellus with the publicans, friends of the Tetrarch, the notables of Cana, Ptolemais, and Jericho; then, mingled pell-mell, mountaineers from Libanus and Herod's old soldiers (twelve Thracians, a Gaul, two Germans), gazelle-hunters, Idumean shepherds, the Sultan of Palmyra, seamen of Eziongeber. Each person had before him a cake of soft dough, on which to wipe his fingers; and their arms, stretching out like vultures' necks, seized olives, pistachioes, and almonds. All the faces beamed with joy beneath crowns of flowers.

The Pharisees had spurned them as Roman wantonness. They shuddered when they were sprinkled with galburnum and incense, a compound reserved for the use of the Temple.

Aulus rubbed his armpits with it; and Antipas promised him a whole cargo, with three bales of that genuine balsam which caused Cleopatra to covet Palestine.

A captain of his garrison at Tiberias, recently arrived, took his place behind him, to tell him of extraordinary events. But his attention was divided between the Proconsul and what was being said at the neighbouring tables.

The talk was of Iaokanann and men of his type; Simon of Gittoy purged sin with fire. A certain Jesus ——

"The worst of all!" cried Eleazar. "An infamous juggler!"

Behind the Tetrarch a man arose, as pale as the hem of his chlamys. He descended from the platform and addressed the Pharisees:

"False! Jesus does miracles!"

Antipas would fain see one.

"You should have brought Him hither! Tell us."

Then he told that he, Jacob, having a daughter who was sick, had betaken himself to Capernaum, to implore the Master to heal her. The Master had replied: "Return to thy home, she is healed!"—and he had found her in the doorway, having left her bed when the hand of the dial marked three o'clock, the very moment when he had accosted Jesus.

Of course, argued the Pharisees, there are devices, powerful herbs! Sometimes, even there, at Machærus, one found the *baaras,* which made men invulnerable; but to cure without seeing or touching was an impossibility, unless Jesus employed demons.

And the friends of Antipas, the chief men of Galilee, repeated, shaking their heads:

"Demons, clearly."

Jacob, standing between their table and that of the priests, held his peace, with a haughty yet gentle bearing.

They called upon him to speak:—"Explain His power."

He bent his shoulders, and in an undertone, slowly, as if afraid of himself:

"Know you not that He is the Messiah?"

All the priests glanced at one another, and Vitellius inquired the meaning of the word. His interpreter waited a full minute before replying.

They called by that name a liberator who should bring to them the enjoyment of all their goods and power over all peoples. Some indeed maintained that two should be expected. The first would be vanquished by Gog and Magog, demons of the North; but the other would exterminate the Prince of Evil; and for ages they had expected His coming every minute.

The priests having taken counsel together, Eleazar spoke for them.

First, the Messiah would be a Son of David, not of a carpenter. He would confirm the Law; this Nazarene assailed it; and—a yet

stronger argument — he was to be preceded by the coming of Elias.

Jacob retorted:

"But Elias has come!"

"Elias! Elias!" echoed the multitude, even to the farthest end of the hall.

All, in imagination, saw an old man beneath a flock of ravens, the lightning shining upon an altar, idolatrous pontiffs cast into raging torrents; and the women in the tribunes, thought of the widow of Zarephath.

Jacob wearied himself repeating that he knew him! He had seen him! And so had the people!

"His name?"

Whereupon he shouted with all his strength:

"Iaokanann!"

Antipas fell backward as if stricken full in the chest. The Sadducees leaped upon Jacob. Eleazar harangued, seeking to obtain an audience.

When silence was restored, he folded his

cloak about him and propounded questions, like a judge.

"Since the prophet is dead ——"

Murmurs interrupted him. It was believed that Elias had disappeared only.

He angrily rebuked the multitude, and asked, continuing his inquiry:

"Think you that he has come to life again?"

"Why not?" said Jacob.

The Sadducees shrugged their shoulders; Jonathas, half closing his little eyes, forced himself to laugh, like a clown. Nothing could be more absurd than the claim of the body to life everlasting; and he declaimed, for the Proconsul's benefit, this line from a contemporary poet:

Nec crescit, nec post mortem durare videtur.

But Aulus was leaning over the edge of the triclinium, his forehead bathed in sweat, green of face, his hands on his stomach.

The Sadducees feigned deep emotion—on the morrow the office of sacrificer was restored to them; Antipas made parade of

despair; Vitellius remained impassive. None the less his suffering was intense; with his son he would lose his fortune.

Aulus had not finished vomiting when he wished to eat again.

"Give me some marble-dust, schist from Naxos, sea-water, no matter what! Suppose I should take a bath?"

He crunched snow; then, after hesitating between a Commagene stew and pink blackbirds, he decided upon gourds with honey. The Asiatic stared at him, that faculty of absorbing food denoting a prodigious being of a superior race.

Bulls' kidneys were served, also dormice, nightingales, and minced-meat on vine leaves; and the priests disputed concerning the resurrection. Ammonius, pupil of Philo the Platonist, deemed them stupid, and said as much to Greeks who laughed at the oracles. Marcellus and Jacob had come together. The first described to the second the bliss he had felt during his baptism by Mithra, and Jacob

urged him to follow Jesus. Wines made from the palm and the tamarisk, wines of Safed and of Byblos, flowed from amphoræ into crateres, from crateres into drinking-cups, from drinking-cups down thirsty throats; there was much talk, and hearts overflowed. Jacim, although a Jew, did not conceal his adoration of the planets. A merchant of Aphaka stupefied the nomads by detailing the wonders of the Temple of Hierapolis: and they asked how much the pilgrimage would cost. Others clung to their native religion. A German, almost blind, sang a hymn in praise of that promontory of Scandinavia where the gods appeared with halos about their faces; and men from Sichem refused to eat turtle-doves, from respect for the dove Azima.

Many talked, standing in the centre of the hall, and the vapour of their breaths, with the smoke of the candles, made a fog in the air. Phanuel passed along the wall. He had been studying the firmament anew, but he did not approach the Tetrarch, dreading the drops

of oil, which, to the Essenes, were a great pollution.

Blows rang out against the gate of the castle.

It was known now that Iaokanann was held a prisoner there. Men with torches ascended the path; a black mass swarmed in the ravine; and they roared from time to time:

"Iaokanann! Iaokanann!"

"He disturbs everything!" said Jonathas.

"We shall have no money left if he continues!" added the Pharisees.

And recriminations arose:

"Protect us!"

"Let us make an end of him!"

"You abandon the religion!"

"Impious as the Herods!"

"Less so than you!" retorted Antipas. "It was my father who built your temple!"

Thereupon the Pharisees, the sons of the proscribed, the partisans of the Mattathiases, accused the Tetrarch of the crimes of his family.

They had pointed skulls, bristling beards, weak and evil hands, or flat noses, great round eyes, and the expression of a bulldog. A dozen or more, scribes and servants of the priests, fed upon the refuse of holocausts, rushed as far as the foot of the platform, and with knives threatened Antipas, who harangued them, while the Sadducees listlessly defended him. He spied Mannæus and motioned him to go, Vitellius signifying by his expression that these things did not concern him.

The Pharisees, remaining on their triclinia, worked themselves into a demoniacal frenzy. They broke the dishes before them. They had been served with the favourite stew of Mæcenas — wild ass — unclean meat.

Aulus mocked at them on the subject of the ass's head, which they held in honour, it was said, and indulged in other sarcasms concerning their antipathy for pork. Doubtless it was because that vulgar beast had killed their Bacchus; and they were too fond of

wine, since a golden vine had been discovered in the Temple.

The priests did not understand his words. Phineas, by birth a Galilæan, refused to translate them. Thereupon Aulus's wrath knew no bounds, the more as the Asiatic, seized with fright, had disappeared; and the repast failed to please him, the dishes being commonplace, not sufficiently disguised! He became calmer when he saw tails of Syrian sheep, which are bundles of fat.

The character of the Jews seemed hideous to Vitellius. Their god might well be Moloch, whose altars he had noticed along the road; and the sacrifices of children recurred to his mind, with the story of the man whom they were mysteriously fattening. His Latin heart rose in disgust at their intolerance, their iconoclastic frenzy, their brutish stagnation. The Proconsul wished to go, Aulus refused.

His robe fallen to his hips, he lay behind a heap of food, too replete to take more, but persisting in not leaving it.

The excitement of the people increased. They abandoned themselves to schemes of independence. They recalled the glory of Israel. All the conquerors had been punished: Antigonus, Crassus, Varus.

"Villains!" exclaimed the Proconsul; for he understood Syriac; his interpreter simply gave him time to compose his replies.

Antipas quickly drew the medallion of the Emperor, and, watching him tremblingly, held it with the image towards him.

Suddenly the panels of the golden tribune opened; and in the brilliant blaze of candles, between her slaves and festoons of anemone, Herodias appeared — on her head an Assyrian mitre held in place on her brow by a chin-piece; her hair fell in spiral curls over a scarlet peplum, slit along the sleeves. With two stone monsters, like those that guard the treasure of the Atrides, standing against the door, she resembled Cybele flanked by her lions; and from the balustrade above Antipas, she cried, patera in hand:

"Long life to Cæsar!"

This homage was echoed by Vitellius, Antipas, and the priests.

But there came to them from the lower end of the hall a hum of surprise and admiration. A young girl had entered.

Beneath a bluish veil that concealed her breast and her head could be seen her arched eyebrows, the sards at her ears, the whiteness of her skin. A square of variegated silk covered her shoulders and was secured about her hips by a golden girdle. Her black drawers were embroidered with mandrakes, and she tapped the floor indolently with tiny slippers of humming-birds' feathers.

When she reached the platform, she removed her veil. It was Herodias, as she was in her youth. Then she began to dance.

Her feet passed, one before the other, to the music of a flute and a pair of crotala. Her rounded arms seemed to beckon some one, who always fled. She pursued him, lighter than a butterfly, like an inquisitive Psyche,

like a wandering soul, and seemed on the point of flying away.

The funereal notes of the gingras succeeded the crotala. Prostration had followed hope. Her attitudes signified sighs, and her whole person a languor so intense that one knew not whether she was weeping for a god or dying of joy in his embrace. Her eyes half closed, she writhed and swayed with billowy undulations of the stomach; her bosoms quivered, her face remained impassive, and her feet did not stop.

Vitellius compared her to Mnester the pantomimist. Aulus was vomiting again. The Tetrarch lost himself in a dream and thought no more of Herodias. He fancied that he saw her near the Sadducees. The vision faded away.

It was not a vision. She had sent messengers, far from Machærus, to Salome her daughter, whom the Tetrarch loved; and it was an excellent scheme. She was sure of him now!

Then it was the frenzy of love that de-

manded to be satisfied. She danced like the priestesses of the Indies, like the Nubian girls of the Cataracts, like the Bacchantes of Lydia. She threw herself in all directions, like a flower beaten by the storm. The jewels in her ears leaped about, the silk on her back shone with a changing gleam; from her arms, from her feet, from her garments invisible sparks flashed and set men aflame. A harp sang; the multitude replied with loud applause. By stretching her legs apart, without bending her knees, she stooped so low that her chin touched the floor; and the nomads, accustomed to abstinence, the Roman soldiers, experts in debauchery, the miserly publicans, the old priests soured by disputes, all, distending their nostrils, quivered with desire.

Then she danced about Antipas's table, in a frenzy of excitement, like a witch's rhombus; and in a voice broken by sobs of lust he said: "Come! come!" She danced on; the dulcimers rang out as if they would burst; the crowd roared. But the Tetrarch shouted

louder than them all: "Come! come! thou shalt have Capernaum! the plain of Tiberias! my citadels! half of my kingdom!"

She threw herself on her hands, heels in the air, and thus circled the platform like a huge scarab, then stopped abruptly.

Her neck and her vertebræ were at right angles. The coloured skirts that enveloped her legs, falling over her shoulders like a rainbow, framed her face a cubit from the floor. Her lips were painted, her eyebrows intensely black, her eyes almost terrible, and drops of sweat on her forehead resembled steam on white marble.

She did not speak. They gazed at each other.

There was a snapping of fingers in the tribune. She went thither, reappeared, and, lisping a little, uttered these words with an infantine air:

"I want you to give me, on a charger, the head ——" She had forgotten the name, but she continued with a smile: "The head of Iaokanann!"

The Tetrarch sank back, overwhelmed.

He was bound by his word, and the people were waiting. But the death that had been predicted to him, should it befall another, might avert his own. If Iaokanann were really Elias, he could escape it; if he were not, the murder would be of no importance.

Mannæus was at his side and understood his purpose.

Vitellius recalled him to give him the countersign of the sentinels guarding the moat.

It was a relief. In a moment all would be over.

But Mannæus was hardly prompt in the execution of his functions.

He reappeared, but greatly perturbed.

For forty years he had filled the post of executioner. He it was who had drowned Aristobulus, strangled Alexander, burned Mattathias alive, beheaded Zosimus, Pappus, Josephus, and Antipater, and he dared not kill Iaokanann! His teeth chattered, his whole body trembled.

He had seen in front of the hole the Great Angel of the Samaritans, all covered with eyes, and brandishing an enormous sword, red and jagged like a flame. Two soldiers brought forward as witnesses could confirm him.

They had seen nothing save a Jewish captain, who had rushed upon them and who had ceased to live.

The frantic rage of Herodias burst forth in a torrent of vulgar and murderous abuse. She broke her nails on the gilded grating of the tribune, and the two carved lions seemed to bite at her shoulders and to roar with her.

Antipas imitated her, so did the priests, the soldiers, the Pharisees, all demanding vengeance; and others indignant that their pleasure was delayed.

Mannæus went forth, hiding his face.

The guests found the time of waiting even longer than before. They were bored.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps echoed in

the corridors. The suspense became intolerable.

The head entered; and Mannæus held it by the hair, at arm's length, proud of the applause.

When he had laid it on a charger, he offered it to Salome. She ran lightly up to the tribune; some moments later the head was brought back by the same old woman whom the Tetrarch had noticed that morning on the roof of a house, and later in Herodias's chamber.

He recoiled to avoid looking at it. Vitellius cast an indifferent glance upon it.

Mannæus went down from the platform and exhibited it to the Roman captains, then to all those who were eating in that part of the hall.

They examined it.

The sharp blade of the instrument, cutting downward, had touched the jaw. The corners of the mouth were drawn aside convulsively. Blood, already clotted, studded the

beard. The closed eyelids were of a leaden hue, like shells; and the candelabra all about shone upon it.

It reached the priests' table. A Pharisee turned it over curiously, and Mannæus, having turned it back again, placed it in front of Aulus, who was awakened by it. Through their partly open lids the dead eyes and the lifeless eyes seemed to speak to each other.

Then Mannæus presented it to Antipas. Tears flowed down the Tetrarch's cheeks.

The torches were extinguished. The guests took their leave, and Antipas alone remained in the hall, his hands pressed against his temples, still gazing at the severed head; while Phanuel, standing in the centre of the great nave, muttered prayers with outstretched arms.

At the moment when the sun rose, two men, previously despatched by Iaokanann, returned with the long-awaited answer.

They confided it to Phanuel, who was enraptured by it.

Then he showed them the sorrowful object on the charger, amidst the remnants of the feast. One of the men said to him:

"Be comforted! He has gone down among the dead to announce the Christ 's coming!"

The Essene understood now the words: "That He may grow great, I must needs shrink."

And all three, having taken the head of Iaokanann, went forth in the direction of Galilee.

As it was very heavy, they carried it each in turn.

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